

File Copy
(1 of 3)

FARM POPULATION
& RURAL WELFARE

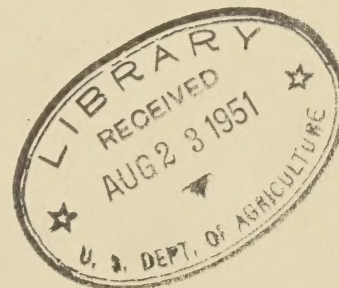
MAR 31 1943

FP-97.
Fuller
Page
Mutzler

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics,
Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare "

3
NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION GROUPS AMONG
LOW-INCOME FARM FAMILIES IN TEXAS,

T. Wilson Longmore
Assistant Social Science Analyst



sa Little Rock, Arkansas
January 1943
5c

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY



A majority of our farm families have had in the past little opportunity to participate actively in community meetings of any kind. In the past they have been the chief listeners, although they may not have agreed with the speaker who was attempting to "funnel in" a bit of information or viewpoint. The fact that they had no opportunity to participate in such meetings has no doubt affected their interest and their attendance.

It has been interesting to observe in these neighborhood discussion groups that the above attitudes and conditions have not existed. As soon as they recognize that their own ideas are sought and respected, they readily and freely enter into the discussion and in most cases conclude the meeting by expressing their desire to return to their respective neighborhoods and call into their own homes a few neighbors with whom they can discuss their mutual and passing problems.

It is impossible for the Rural Supervisor to attend each such meeting in every neighborhood in the county but in our opinion a few select neighborhoods may be handled by getting together representatives with leadership from each neighborhood and by using these representatives as a discussion group on ways and means of keeping alive the interest in each of the neighborhoods.

There are apparent reasons why this type of program should continue to bear fruit.

C. T. Watson
State Director for Texas

FOREWORD

The Regional Director of Farm Security Administration, Region VIII, assigned Homer L. Massey of the Education and Organization Unit of the Community and Cooperative Services Section of FSA to assist in introducing a program of neighborhood discussion groups among low-income farm families in Texas. Cooperating with the State Director, through whose office requests from the field were routed, and personnel of the respective areas and districts in which the work was conducted, a series of meetings was arranged.

T. Wilson Longmore of the Area 6 office of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics located in Little Rock observed and analyzed the initial work in these districts and prepared this report.

NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION GROUPS AMONG LOW-INCOME FARM FAMILIES IN TEXAS

SIGNIFICANCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION GROUPS

In a sense neighborhood discussion groups are "councils of war" through which neighbors pool experience and judgment. Their relevance to a democracy at war is justified by the sense of belonging and recognition which they impart to members of a group. The warm emotional response which most people feel around a neighbor's hearth surrounded by trusted friends is one of the stimuli which "make it work". 1/

The feasibility and value of neighborhood discussion groups is generally accepted; this report deals with method and procedure in initiating and demonstrating neighborhood discussion techniques in different types of farming areas.

Over-all objectives were: (1) To explore the possibilities of initiating neighborhood discussion groups among low-income farm families under varying conditions present in Texas. (2) To determine technique likely to be most successful in different situations. (3) To acquaint FSA personnel with neighborhood discussion group methods through actual participation in them.

This report draws primarily upon experience in 9 leader discussion group meetings which were held in Kaufman, Freestone, Angelina, Tyler and Liberty Counties between November 2 and November 10, and in Cooke, Hamilton, San Saba, and Bexar Counties between November 30 and December 4, and 5 neighborhood discussion group meetings in Cooke, Bosque, Hamilton, and Bexar Counties from November 11 to December 4.

The plan of work called for: First, a meeting on the county level with representative leaders selected from FSA families and leaders of other farm organizations, including the county agent, home demonstration agent, and War Board Chairman. At this meeting the fundamentals of neighborhood discussion groups were presented and the use which might be made of them in securing the more complete participation of low-income farm families in the war effort was explored. Second, it was assumed that from this meeting some of the neighborhood leaders would be inspired to voluntarily take upon themselves the responsibility of calling in their neighbors for group discussion. (It was planned that this meeting would be observed by the FSA personnel) Third, a staff meeting of all FSA personnel followed the

1/For a study of some of the psychological and sociological factors involved see the following reports: "Neighborhood Discussion Groups, FSA Region VIII," July, 1942; and "Neighborhood Discussion Groups in Relation to the FSA Program in Delaware County, Oklahoma," August, 1942. Copies may be secured from the regional FSA office, Dallas, Texas.

discussions at which time techniques were analyzed and individual observations checked.

Many questions were raised during progress of the work and this report attempts to summarize them. Its practical purpose, therefore, is to answer some of the most important questions which come up when district or county staffs set about the details of planning and initiating neighborhood discussions.

EAST TEXAS

Observations were made in the following counties in east Texas: Kaufman, Navarro, Freestone, Tyler, Angelina and Liberty. Districts represented by these counties and respective RR supervisors are: District III, N. A. Cleveland; District IV, MacNeal Irwin; District VI, C. William Brodnax, Jr.; District X, Paul M. Heims; District XII, John B. Cunningham.

Area specialists cooperating included: Roger Davis and Louie Dunbar of the Sand Hill-Piney Woods Area, and A. B. Kennerly of the Gulf Coast Special Crops Area, and W. M. Burkes of the Texas Black Waxy Area. In addition, the following area home management supervisors participated: Gladys L. Darden and Elizabeth Hoffman of the San Hill-Piney Woods Area, Beulah R. Smith of the Gulf Coast Special Crops Area, and Willie Mae Dunham of the Texas Black Waxy Area.

Before setting out on the study of initiating neighborhood discussion groups in Texas, Homer L. Massey and T. Wilson Longmore participated in a staff conference on November 2, 1942, with the following FSA officials: C. T. Watson, State Director; L. A. Machemehl, Assistant State Director; A. B. Kennerly, Area Specialist; and George Smith, John B. Cunningham, and N. A. Cleveland, District Supervisors.

At this conference it was pointed out that people reacted differently in various parts of the State and the suggestion was made that some observations on how people react to group action or procedure (cooperatives and and group supervision) would be helpful in implementing the new FSA approach through Area Plans. A general picture of the new Area Plan approach was given.

Kaufman County

Kaufman County FSA staff requested assistance in initiating the neighborhood discussion group program. A "neighborhood" was selected by the county staff and all FSA borrowers in the area were invited to be present at Hiram schoolhouse at 7:30PM, November 2, 1942. No non-borrowers were invited.

Kaufman County Leader Discussion Group November 2, 1942

<u>NAME</u>	<u>FARMERS</u>	<u>AGE OF HEAD</u>	<u>TYPE OF FSA BORROWERS</u>
1. Robert Hensley		40	RR
2. Andrew Lucas and wife		39	TP
3. W. A. Peters and wife		40	RR

4. Victor Porter	37	RR
5. John L. Rogers and wife	36	RR
6. Preston Williams and wife	36	RR

OTHERS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
1. Ed Martin	County RR Supervisor
2. Robert A. Beckham	Ass't RR Supervisor
3. Laura Jones	County HM Supervisor
4. G. T. Watson	State Director
5. Mattie A. Trickey	State HM Supervisor
6. Willie Mae Dunham	Area HM Supervisor
7. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
8. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

The meeting was late in starting because the school teacher with whom arrangements were made to open up the building forgot about it; consequently, someone was required to notify him. About 8:10PM six farm families assembled in one of the schoolrooms, arranging themselves about a long table used for hot school lunches. A quilt and frame was suspended from the ceiling and cast a shadow over the table at which they sat. All officials present except Homer L. Massey secured seats outside the circle of farm people and were thus in a position to observe and listen.

In the course of the discussion few direct suggestions were made. Discussion was stimulated by questions related to a broad prearranged outline. In its fundamentals the outline consisted of an analysis of the community and simple fundamentals of community organization. Then a recognition of needs or problems was developed which led naturally into an adaptation of the facts brought out in the community analysis as an approach to solution of these problems.

The County HM Supervisor opened the meeting by a brief introduction of Homer L. Massey, who stated that the reason for the meeting was to find out what farm families were thinking and planning for the all-out war effort to produce food.

Discussion was promoted by a series of questions and presentation of fundamental facts. Only the more important questions and responses are briefly summarized and analyzed below: 1/

1. Question.--" How many families here have sons or daughters in the Service?

Answer 1.--(At first no response, then...) "I've got three brothers in the Army".

1/ This summary can only give the bare essentials of a discussion group. Little analysis of data is made in the process of developing the discussion. It should also be kept in mind that qualitative differences, such as degree of spontaneity, the sex composition in responses, the effectiveness and choice of local leaders, reasons for attending and other factors are not analyzed in this report for sake of brevity.

Answer 2.- "We'll have one in soon."

(This question was asked in order to ascertain how close the war was touching the families in the community, and thus bring a realization of the seriousness of the times into the situation.)

2. Question.- "What is the name of this community?"

Answer.- "Hiram". (Generally agreed to.)

3. Question.- "Where do each of you live and how far from the schoolhouse?"

Answer 1.- "Hiram, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of here."

Answer 2.- "I live in Black Jack community, 4 miles east."

Answer 3.- "Hiran, $3/4$ miles south."

Answer 4.- "Black Jack, 3 miles east."

Answer 5.- "Hiram, 1 mile North."

Answer 6.- "Hiran, $1/4$ mile west."

(It was apparent at this point that two different communities, Hiram and Black Jack, were represented, rather than one. Furthermore, the group did not represent a functioning neighborhood as was at first supposed.)

4. Question.- "How many families in your community?"

Answer 1.- "Hiram has 50 or 60 families."

Answer 2.- " Black Jack has 30 or 40."

5. Explanation.- "You know our social structure is made up, first, of the family-- the husband and wife, and the children. Then groups of families make up what we call a neighborhood or neighbors, and, finally, groups of neighborhoods constitute a community. That's the way our society seems to function. Is that true in your community?"

Answer.- "Yes". (General acquiescence indicated by nodding of heads.)

6. Question.- "What is a sure-enough neighbor?"

Answer 1.- "That's a person you can call on any time you need help."

Answer 2.- " A good way to count your neighbors is when you have a long seige of sickness. Sure know 'em then."

7. Question.- "How many neighbors do you have?"

Answer 1.- "Ain't very many, six or eight, I guess."

Answer 2.- " 'Bout five or six."

8. Question.- "Do you think anyone but you can tell who your neighbors are?"

Answer 1.- "No sir!" (General agreement)

(This question shifted some of the responsibility for neighborhood action to the farm families and clarified the administrative problem of how neighbors should be chosen. The leader (Homer L. Massey) added the following confirming statement: "Who are we, to tell a farmer who his neighbors are?")

9. Question.- "Do you think your neighbors would come to visit you if you invited them in?"

Answer 1.-"People don't neighbor like they used to."

Answer 2.-"When I was a kid we always had lots of get-togethers."

Answer 3.-"Seems to me we'll have to get together oftener now, with gas rationing and all."

10. Question.-"Why don't neighbors cooperate as much as they used to?"

Answer 1.-"They don't have to, that's why."

Answer 2.-"Automobiles."

Answer 3.-"Too much gallivanting around."

Answer 4.-" They're trying to beat each other."

Answer 5.-"Seems to me in the last six months people are turning more to helping each other."

(Consensus seemed to be that although cooperation among neighbors was poor in the past, the urgent demands of the war were forcing increased cooperation both socially and economically.)

11. Question.-"How large a school do you have in your neighborhood?"

Answer 1.-"Don't have one, its consolidated."

Answer 2.-"Two-teacher school here at Hiram."

12. Question.-"How many kinfolks are there in the community?"

Answer 1.-"Not many".

13. Question.-"Do you have a church?"

Answer 1.-"Yes, at Hiram. But the community is divided into church and non-church families. That doesn't help bring us together much."

14. Question.--"What do you people do (in an organizational way)?"

Answer 1.--"Go to church on Sunday. That's about all."

Answer 2.--"We had a 'Club' out here, but it isn't functioning now."

15. Question.--"Are you folks over-met?"

Answer 1.--"I should say not! 'Course the men go to town more often and women stay at home, but even that will change now."

Answer 2.--"After the young folks left, the community went dead."

16. Explanation.--"You know we find in some areas that only about 10 percent of the people in the community are really taking part in the war effort. They're the ones who are on the AAA committees, rationing boards, stewards in the churches, school trustees, Red Cross members, and so forth. The other 90 percent are not taking an active part in the all-out effort. Is that true here?"

Answer 1.--"That's absolutely right." (General agreement indicated by more interest and nodding of heads.)

Answer 2.--"There's a group of men up at the county seat doing the planning."

17. Question.--"Why is that true?"

Answer 1.--"People are just waiting."

Answer 2.--"No one wants to take the lead."

18. Question.--"Who should take the lead?"

Answer 1.--"I don't know. Guess we should."
(Continued perseverance was necessary to keep them assuming more and more responsibility for the situation.)

19. Question.--"Who is your War Board Chairman?"

Answer.-- (Shaking of heads indicated a lack of knowledge.)

20. Explanation.--"Isn't the War Board the over-all agency for getting food produced in Kaufman County? How will they know what is needed unless you people tell them? Have you ever called upon them with your problems? (None had done so. There was a lack of knowledge of what the War Board was set up to do.)

21. Question.--"What are people in your community doing in the all-out war effort?"

Answer 1.--"Getting in the scrap -- rubber and metal."

Answer 2.--"Peanuts."

(There was no evidence presented of active war organization in which these people were participating. At this point no clear recognition of the need for more active organization or more widespread participation was apparent.)

22. Question.--"What more can farmers do than they are already doing in the war effort?"

Answer 1.--"I don't know, other than produce more food."

23. Question.--"How can your food production be increased?"

Answer 1.--"We've got to cut down on some crops like cotton, and raise more meat, milk, and eggs."

answer 2.--"A bunch of us must get our minds together and figger on what we want to do, then get everyone to help on it."

24. Question.--"Can a group of neighbors working together get more done than they could individually?"

Answer 1.--"Sure. And by pooling what we market we can get more money for a large batch."

(At this point in the discussion the pros and cons of group action was deliberated upon. Out of it came a consensus that by getting together neighbors could help in the war production program.)

25. Question.--"How are you going about it?"

Answer 1.--"Well, I'm going home and talk it over with my neighbors and then call them in."

26. Question.--"Where will you call them to meet?"

Answer 1.-- "My home."

27. Question.--"Do people feel as free to talk in a schoolhouse meeting as in a neighbor's home?"

Answer 1.--"No sir."

28. Question.--"Why?"

Answer 1.--"Because too many people are looking at them."

Answer 2.--"Everyone figgers the other person can say it better than he can."

(This set of questions drove home the necessity for calling neighborhood meetings in homes rather than at the schoolhouse.)

29. Explanation.--"The neighborhood meeting prepares the way for the schoolhouse meeting. You may wish to select a delegate from your neighborhood group to meet with delegates of other neighborhoods at the schoolhouse. How many of you would like to go home and think it over and call your neighbors in for a discussion?" (Show of three hands)

The foregoing narrative is a skeltonized version of what took place and is illustrative of the procedure and general outline followed. Perhaps it should be mentioned that the general motivating force which focuses the discussion is "How to win the War?", and specifically in terms of rural people, "How to produce the necessary food required to win the war?"

The next day a staff conference was held with the assistant RR supervisor and the county HM supervisor. The meeting of the night before was reviewed and each individual's observations checked. Emphasis was placed on the steps which were taken to set in motion the neighborhood discussion group program.

From the staff it was learned that less than 10 per cent of the FSA wives were members of Home Demonstration Clubs. The county staff feels that Negroes participate more in community affairs than whites, and, consequently, might be more receptive to a discussion group program. One reason given for this was the fact that Negroes do not migrate as much as whites.

NAVARRO COUNTY

On November 3, 1942, an afternoon leader discussion group meeting was scheduled at Corsicana, Texas, in Navarro County. This meeting failed to materialize as no leaders showed up.

The county staff explained that impending rains had forced a number of families to forego attending the meeting in order that they might continue their crop harvest. A number of the leaders invited had phoned in, explaining their situation, and it was assumed that all were forced to stay in the fields.

Discussion with the county staff revealed that an attempt was made to organize neighborhood discussion groups in April, 1942. Just about the time they had completed plans on this program, Extension came along with their Victory Leader Council, and through attendance at a series of meetings called by Extension, the local FSA staff felt that it was inadvisable to continue with their neighborhood discussion group program.

At the time this decision was made, the staff had prepared subject matter handbooks for use of the community leaders and also for each FSA family.

Pertinent facts developed out of this discussion include:

1. Many good rental farms of 150 acres or more are available in Navarro County; however, six TP clients have been selected but they can't find farms. About 9 percent of the FSA borrowers are land-owners. Ownership of land in Navarro County is vested in very few people. (Tenancy 1940, 72 percent.)
2. Communities are handicapped by large numbers of old people who are left.
3. The county has a Medical Association which has functioned satisfactorily.
4. Settlement in many areas is scattered, making community organization difficult, particularly among FSA borrowers. However, a large share of the 200 FSA borrowers are concentrated in the northwest sector.
5. Negroes are both infiltrated and clustered in the county.
6. Negroes of the county are more community-minded than the whites.
7. Many of the FSA borrowers have radios; expenses for farm magazines are included in loans.
8. Many families are not visited more than once during the year.

The supervisor asked if a neighborhood discussion group meeting could be arranged by personal contact with a particular local leader. An analysis of the community map of the county (an excellent county map was available on which each FSA borrower was located) suggested that an approach might be made through one of the accepted community leaders.

A staff discussion of the neighborhood map of the county indicated that one of the most promising neighborhoods might be a Negro neighborhood which displayed a high degree of solidarity. This was evidenced by large numbers of kinfolk, the degree of institutional development, which included two churches, a Masonic lodge, a grade and high school, and many habits of cooperation. The community is an all-Negro community of tenant farmers wherein the land also is owned by Negroes.

Having decided upon the neighborhood the next step consisted in contacting the accepted leader. He was approached at his farm home. The leader was a man of 49 years, with a wife and one child at home. He had lived in the community all his life and knew everyone in it. His farm consisted of 96 acres, all of which he was renting from his aunt.

Out of a 2-hour discussion with the leader, it was disclosed that the community contained 82 families of which he considered 12 or 15 to be his "close neighbors". He said people are anxious to do more in the war effort than they are doing. Eighteen men from the community have enlisted and that has brought the war home to those families effected. The local preacher has been trying to "stir them up" but has not met with much success. In describing his neighborhood, he likened it to another neighborhood in the community where an old man had six sons and they live together on a hillside, but each in his own house. The old gentlemen lived on the hilltop while the sons lived "Up the hill and around the hill". He could round up all the boys at a moment's notice by sounding an old hound-dog horn which he kept handy for hunting.

Much perseverance and time were necessary in this particular case to break down the reticence and catering manner of the Negro. Someone remarked that a woman had raised the question in a meeting just the other day why it was that some people had no "backbone" any more. Here is the Negro's reply: "We're just talkin' between us now. I'll just 'fess up. Here's what makes some of us colored folks act like we do. I lived awhile on a white man's place before FSA came along. Ah couldn't market a bale of my cotton 'less I got the white man's permission. Now you know that wasn't right. Makes a man with no mind of his own." He mentioned this as one of the reasons for the Negro's lack of initiative. He was asked if he thought it possible for a person to lose his personal identity in a program. He said, "You mean there are some people who like to get something started like this just so they can point to it and say, 'Look what I've done.' Tha's right, tha's right. But we all have to forget a lot of that now that we're in this war. I sure can get my neighbors in."

This leader called in his neighbors for a meeting in his home the following week.

The county staff commented that the greatest thing to overcome in developing a program such as neighborhood discussion groups is the idea on the part of the farmers that you are trying to get them to do something for FSA. As an example, the story was told of how, when a home supervisor on her regular supervisory trip, called attention to a certain weakness in a farm wife's home plan, the housewife retorted indignantly, "Why, I've canned 200 quarts of green vegetables for you!"

FREESTONE COUNTY.

On November 4, 1942, an afternoon leader discussion group met at Fairfield, Texas, in Freestone County. It was pouring rain, but the FSA leaders came in one by one. One man telephoned by long distance to say that he would be in on the bus, and might be a few minutes late. Of the 16 leaders invited, 8 were in attendance. Three of the 8 leaders were Negroes.

Freestone County Leader Discussion Group
November 4, 1942

Farmers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Community</u>
1. Claude Anderson	Lanely
2. Henry W. Ayers	Dew
3. Willie C. Blaine	Fairfield
4. Delbert B. Brown	Plum Creek
5. Elzie V. Crawford	Butler
6. Mrs. C. F. Horton	Stewart Mill
7. Antonio Jackson	Lone Star
8. James M. Mullenex	Looney

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Louis W. Lee	County RR Supervisor
2. Eva E. Tidwell	County HM Supervisor
3. Otto H. Juren	Ass't County RR Supv.
4. N. A. Cleveland	District Supervisor
5. Elizabeth Hoffman	Area HM Supervisor
6. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
7. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

The plan followed at this meeting was similar to that in Kaufman County, and about the same questions were raised. Some of the more important questions, the responses, and their significance, are given below:

1. Question.- "Who are your neighbors?"

Answer 1. "They are families within hollering distance!"

Answer 2. "Everyone is related in Stewart's Mill, that makes a difference.

2. Question.- "What are farmers in your community doing in the war effort?"

Answer 1.- "We feed ourselves."

Answer 2.- "Peanuts and scrap, that's about all."

3. Question.- "Do you have any organization functioning?"

Answer 1.- "We have held seven meetings in our community (Negro)."

(The only definite statement of a wartime organization functioning was given by the above Negro who then explained how he was appointed by the county agent as Victory Leader. He had assumed his responsibilities, and had four other Negro neighborhood leaders under him who met once a month. The neighborhoods met once a week. In fact, he mentioned the fact that he had delayed his regular neighborhood meeting, scheduled for the preceding night, until after he had been able to attend this leader discussion group meeting and make a report on it to his neighbors. One white farmer commented, "By golly, they are doing more than we are.")

4. Question.- "Why is there such a lack of activity in the war effort?"

Answer 1.- "The Government has been telling us so long to do something we just sit and wait."

5. Question.- "What can you do to increase war participation?"

Answer 1.- "About all the farmer can do is raise more food."

Answer 2.- "Raise more chickens."

Answer 3.- "We're increasing our pigs from 3 to 15. That's 500 percent, ain't it?"

Answer 4.- "More cows. We can all milk a few more."

Answer 5.- "Cut down cotton and peanuts and raise more hogs, dairy cows, and chickens."

6. Question.- "Are FSA families ever 'looked down upon' by other families in the community?"

Answer 1.- "Well, some of these people think they're a little better than we are. Just because they think you're on the Government. I can't see any difference from those who get Government payments. At least we intend to pay all of it back."

(A lively discussion was aroused over this question and there was general agreement that FSA families are socially isolated because of their status as "borrowing from the Government." One young farm wife stated that she felt she was just as good as any of her neighbors and if they did not do something about it, she was going to invite her Negro neighbors in to plan a war food program. There appeared to be a note of desperation and intense earnestness throughout this discussion. From time to time, it would break itself down to three or four persons earnestly discussing the problem and would continue until the discussion leader would secure the attention of the entire group again.)

7. Question.- "Are many of the doctors leaving for the Armed Forces?"

Answer 1.- "Yes."

8. Question.- "What are you doing to cope with that situation?"

Answer 1.- "What can we do?"

Answer 2.- "A 26-hour training in first aid was given in our community by a doctor and nurse."

(It soon developed that this community was the only one represented which had conducted a medical training program. This was conducted under OCD supervision and in response to the necessity of protecting a vital area. It happened that an oil pipeline ran through a part of the county, and since there was some possibility that it might be bombed, OCD had taken the necessary steps to protect the people living along it. Someone remarked, however, "If that is good for them, it ought to be good for us all.")

This meeting stimulated a number of the leaders to want to go back home and talk it over with neighbors and then call a meeting at one of the homes.

9. Question.- "Do you think your neighbors will come to see you?"

Answer 1.- "Yes, but I want to talk it over a little."

After this meeting, a conference was held with the county staff to check individual observations as was done in Kaufman County.

A neighborhood discussion group met on November 11, 1942, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Anderson in Lanely Community of Freestone County. 2/ In attendance were 8 farm families, members of the FSA county staff, and representatives of the FSA Regional Office and the BAE. One of the farm families indicated that they lived in a neighboring community but remarked that they felt more at home at Lanely.

Neighborhood Discussion Group
November 11, 1942

Lanely Community, Freestone County

Farmers

Name	Type of FSA Borrower or Non-Borrower	Size of Farm
Mr. & Mrs. Claude Anderson	RR	150 acres
Mr. & Mrs. Gus Anderson	NB	32 acres
Mr. & Mrs. P. L. Johnson	NB	6,000 acres
Mr. & Mrs. John Atkinson	NB	90 acres
Mr. & Mrs. John Nash	NB	118 acres
Mr. & Mrs. Sherman Smith	TP	100 acres
Mr. & Mrs. J. D. Johnson	NB	160 acres
Mr. & Mrs. George West	AAA field man	- - -

2/ The verbatim account of this discussion was taken by Madge S. Carpenter, Jr. Clerk-Typist, Freestone County, FSA Office.

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
Miss Anderson	Local School Teacher
Louis W. Lee	RR Supervisor
Eva E. Tidwell	HM Supervisor
Otto H. Juren	Ass't RR Supervisor
Madge S. Carpenter	Jr. Clerk-Typist
Homer L. Massey	FSA
T. Wilson Longmore	BAE

A neighborhood dinner consisting of numerous kinds of meat, including cabarito, slaw, cakes, pies, etc, was served prior to the meeting. Prayer preceded the dinner. After dinner 2 or 3 of the farmers retired to one of the other rooms, closed the door, and planned their meeting. The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss what could be done to further aid in the war effort.

The meeting began by Mr. Anderson explaining why he had invited his neighbors to meet in his home. Immediately, thereafter the County War Board Chairman, Mr. Johnson, who happened to live in the community, assumed a dominant role in the discussion. He arose and put the following questions to the two visitors present: "Who are you?" Whom do you represent? What do you want? What do you have for us tonight?

Mr. Massey replied somewhat as follows: "I am from the Regional Office of FSA at Dallas and Mr. Longmore is from the BAE office at Little Rock. We have been invited out by Mr. Anderson to share in the discussion and we have nothing to offer you. We would like to know how you people are going about winning this war." Mr. Johnson then strode to the fireplace, turned and faced his neighbors, with his hands clasped behind his back and his figure silhouetted against the ruddy glow from the fire. An air of expectancy settled on the group as he began speaking: "That's all I wanted to know. Now, folks, they've come out to listen to us tonight. Let's let them have it! I want to get up here in front where I can look you in the eye." He then reviewed the history of Greece from the remote past to the present calamity which is upon her. This inspired the group with the seriousness of the times. No orator ever held a more spell bound audience. In the midst of this declamation a question was asked: "How are we going to keep just such things from happening in our beloved land?"

A general discussion then began and after a while Mr. Johnson quietly sat down on one side of the fireplace and became a member of the group again. He asked each one present to tell just what he was doing now in aiding the war effort.

Farmer A--"We haven't put forth too much effort so far. We have tried to raise all the food for our own use and some for the market. Also, we have been trying to buy a few stamps."

Farmer B--"We have all got to do something to help."

Farmer C--"That is what I have been arguing all the time. We have all got to help win this war and everybody should make an effort to help in some way. I have sold a lot of hogs.

It looks like to me in the fight we are up against- a large proportion of our boys are gone- it is going to fall back on us older men to follow that plow. The labor problem is up against us. They (meaning defense industries) are taking all of our farm labor away. I guess they have to do that and I am not kicking. We have a certain class that has never done anything and will never do anything. We need someone to tell us what to do. I do not think there is a man in this community that wouldn't follow any suggestion that would help us. It was a struggle this past year and a hard fight."

This brought up the farm labor question. Some of the group felt that they couldn't do anymore in the future than they had in the past with labor becoming so scarce.

Farmer D-"As far as labor is concerned, you can't pay the price that they want."

Another farmer then explained how he had managed: "I have worked and gathered what I could make on 60 acres of land. My neighbors came in and helped. When I was picking on the fourth bale of cotton I finally got some help. But there is not a Negro in 4 or 5 miles from me that I can get to help me."

Farmer B-"We are losing lots of labor. We have lots of Negroes that are trying to farm and don't know what it is about. They are going to west Texas and picking cotton, leaving us down here without any help and leaving their cotton in the field. That is the place for them right at this time because we don't have nothing for them to do. Those Negroes are not doing anything about the labor situation here at home when we do need them though."

Farmer E-"I believe we are asleep. We are not doing anything and we can't do anything. We can't make plans for another year because we don't know what is going to happen in the next year."

Question: "What will it take to wake us up?"

Farmer E-"When a few bombs are dropped on us we will wake up."

Farmer F-"A negro and myself are farming 160 acres of land. He is more than likely to have to go to the Army. That will leave me with 160 acres to farm myself. Knowing this, I feel like I am awake."

Farmer D's Wife-"Another time you will wake up is when you get a boy in the Army."

Farmer E-"We can't make any plans. We do not know what to plan to."

We have some labor here in this community but can't get them to work.

Farmer C-"The way I see it is we do not need to raise so much cotton but more food. You can raise an acre of food, or feed for livestock, just as well as you can raise an acre of cotton. I work about 65 acres with one hand, a Negro. This Negro is gone now so I am going to be the Negro from now on. I've made up my mind I am going to raise as much as the Negro and I both raised."

Farmer C's Wife-"I hadn't gone to the field in seven years until this year but I found I still can be a help there."

Farmer C-"If things go on like it is now, at least 30 percent of the land will lay out. I think we are going to pick up some extra labor that has never been used, but there are a lot of men that have left the farm to draw \$7.00 per day. They are not going back to the farm until they just have to."

A general discussion of plans for farming operations for next year followed.

Farmer C-"There is not a half dozen farms in Freestone County that one plan will work on every farm. I think the best thing is to increase our cows, hogs and poultry, but they all have to be fed."

Farmer D's Wife-"I can raise more chickens than I have before, I know, and I'm planning to do it too."

Farmer A-"When a farmer is producing practically everything he is eating, isn't he helping by not going to the grocery store?"

It was then explained that winning the war would take more from every family than just raising enough food for themselves.

Farmer D-"I had to give up my cows to take care of my crop. I was having to take my milk in to sell it and figured I had better take care of my tires and my crop. I had just planned too much. I had too many cows. When my boy was home he and I could do everything but since he has gone to the Army, I can't do it all myself. But I still have my hogs and chickens. I am going to take care of them and work my crop and do the best I can."

Farmer C-"That is the only way it is going to get done by doing it ourselves."

Farmer D-"We at least ain't going to know until we try."

Farmer A-"I have got to decrease my livestock unless I can get help."

Farmer F-"I am going to increase my livestock and let down on my crops."

Farmer B-"More hogs for me. When I was born my father took me out next morning and showed me a bunch of hogs and said: 'Son this is your calling' and that is the way it has been ever since. Last spring when the Government- this has never been a peanut country- asked this county to plant so many peanuts- 4,800 acres- I don't think there was one man out of ten- there might have been one out of ten- who didn't try. Men that had never planted a peanut in his life. They did their best. If you ask this country to plant weeds, if it would benefit the country, they will do it. Anything to help win the war, they will do. Whatever program that these men (the visitors) will put before these people they are going to do it."

It was explained that the visitors were not present to suggest a plan. The group was told that it seemed that farmers generally know more about what they were capable of doing than anyone else.

Farmer B-"Always before the 'higher-ups' have told us what to do. We have tried to follow just what they said, but I think they are beginning to realize that we know our problems better than they do. If we had some way to present our problems to them and let them work out what was best for us to do, I think that would work. I think that each community should elect two or three men to go before the War Board and present our problems."

Farmer G-"I think that is a good idea and that is the plan we need."

Farmer C-"I think that a meeting should be called in each community and put this before the people, then let them elect a man to go before the War Board. We've got good neighbors and men in the community that should have a say in this. When we start this in our community others are going to do the same thing."

Farmer A-"For the War Board to find out what we need, we will have to tell them ourselves."

Farmer C-"That has been what crippled everything the farmer has sat down to do. He has had to wait until the 'higher-ups' say " you do so-and-so". Now is the time for us to go up and tell the other fellow what we can do and will do.

"The boys over there are looking back to us to support them, and we've got to do it. We are the backbone of the whole nation today and I believe if we will get our people together and work together as neighbors, we will do something. There is not a farmer what won't put every effort forward to win this war. The one that hasn't got boys in this Army has neighbors that has got them in there and the ones that don't feel like working for the neighbors' boy- he is not a citizen.

"Oh, yes, we've got people that cuss our Government. We have them in this county- so called farmers- that is against our Government. But we have got very few of them."

As the meeting closed everyone seemed inspired by the earnestness of every speaker and expressions of appreciation to the host and hostess were heard on all sides.

The group agreed that four different neighborhood groups were represented in the meeting and that each neighborhood would select one man to represent them. These four men would go before the War Board and present their problems. Then these four men would take the information back to their neighborhoods. Each neighborhood would try to work together and attain all the goals set up and try to do more to help win the war.

Angelina County

The FSA staff of Angelina County delineated their county into its various neighborhoods and selected a leader family from each neighborhood. An invitation was sent to seventeen of these leaders to attend a county-wide meeting at Lufkin. On November 6, 1942, a discussion group meeting was held in the Post Office with ten of these leaders present.

Angelina County Leader Discussion Group

November 6, 1942

U. S. Post Office, Lufkin, Texas

Farmers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age of Head</u>	<u>Type of Borrower or Non-Borrower</u>
1. John Boykin	39	TP
2. C. B. Dorsett	24	RR
3. Charlie Chestnut (Negro) & wife	47	RR
4. W. L. Evans	46	RR
5. Lemnel Harville	54	RR
6. Zanthus Johnson	47	RR
7. Leona Richardson	49	RR
8. Albert Seastrunk	39	RR
9. Mrs. Grover Vinson	48	RR
10. John White (Negro)	66	RR

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Dan J. Wallin	County RR Supervisor
2. Ann Carrington	County HM Supervisor
3. Louie Dunbar	Area Specialist
4. N. A. Cleveland	District Supervisor
5. Gladys L. Darden	Area HM Supervisor
6. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
7. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

The procedure followed in this meeting was similar to that used in Kaufman and Freestone Counties. The following 10 neighborhoods were represented: Orr, Salem, Macedoning, Shawnee Switch, Burk, Hudson, Cut Off, Lufkin, Saw Mill and Odell. Shawnee Switch and Cut Off are Negro neighborhoods. One leader said he hadn't lived in the neighborhood long enough to feel that he was a leader. Another leader said he lived "in the middle of two communities." Neighborhoods generally center around a school or church.

Some of the more significant questions and answers brought out in this meeting are presented below.

1. Question.-- "Who is your neighbor?"

Answer 1.- "My neighbor is a person who lives close around me and does neighborly deeds." (Negro)

Answer 2.- "All my neighbors get together and make syrup right there for 15 families."

2. Question.- "Do neighbors neighbor as much as they used to?"

Answer 1.- "No sir."

Answer 2.- "Oh, I don't know. They do when they have to."

Answer 3.- "No sir."

Answer 4.- "Human nature is just about the same now as it ever was."

Answer 5.- "People are becoming closer together on account of the War. Last few months have made a whale of a difference."

(This part of the discussion developed into a consideration of the personal philosophy of the various individuals present and little consensus was reached other than that all felt more neighborly cooperation should be fostered.)

3. Question.- "What are farm families doing in the war effort?"

Answer 1.- "Raising more food."

Answer 2.- "We made clothing for Britain."

Answer 3.- "We have a human telephone line or something."

Answer 4.- "I work 17 hours a day and it is hard to get news and keep up with what is going on."

4. Question.- "Will farmers discuss what they can do to win the war?"

Answer 1.- "The best place to find out what is going on in the county is on the courthouse lawn. They call them the 'tree of knowledge'. One of the old fellows died the other day and they took up a collection to send him some flowers. All that's wrong with them is they never do anything about it." (Other similar clubs are known as "spit-and-whittle" clubs.)

Answer 2.- "We could hold a community meeting but people don't talk in a schoolhouse."

Answer 3.- "We've got to talk this thing through."

Answer 4.- "To win this war just let neighbors get together and start talking. Then do something about it."

Answer 5.- "Have a 'Table discussion' and it'll give 'em strength."

5. Question.- "What will they talk about?"

Answer 1.- "How to win the War. That's what they'll talk about."

6. Question.- "Can the little farmer produce enough food to feed the world?"

Answer 1.- "Many farmers have had to let their crops go."

Answer 2.- "Yes sir, they can do it."

Answer 3.- "Yes sir, they can do it."

Answer 4.- "We've got to."

Answer 5.- "We've canned enough stuff to have a quart a day."

Answer 6.- "We've made our own syrup."

Answer 7.- "We have 2,000 pounds of meat."

Answer 8.- "We started with 30 hens and have increased to 150 hens."

(Many of these answers suggest a defensive position and indicate a natural tendency to think of food production in terms of the needs of the individual family. This is not surprising in view of the fact that many of these families have barely eked out a subsistence in the past. To bring home the seriousness of the food situation, the question was asked, "How much food does it take to feed one soldier for one year?")

7. Question.- "Are farmers waiting to be told what to do?"

Answer 1.- "No."

Answer 2.- "You've got to plan farming away ahead and I don't know when the draft will get me. Everything is so uncertain as far as I'm concerned."

8. Question.- "How can you get people to want to do something?"

Answer 1.- "Hold a group meeting."

Answer 2.- "I try to get my neighbors to raise more chickens by telling them how successful I've been."

Answer 3.- "We ought to find out our needs and problems, then go to those who can help us."

9. Question.- "How would you go about starting some activity?"

Answer 1.- "Let the Supervisor (FSA supervisor) send out a notice from the office."

(This reveals the difficulty of getting some farm families to assume responsibility.)

Answer 2.- "I would send a notice to all the families through our school superintendent."

(At this point the fundamentals of community organization were reviewed again in order to emphasize the importance of starting on a neighborhood level and proceeding to a community level. However, it was pointed out that a community meeting at the schoolhouse might be very helpful after previous understanding had been reached within neighborhoods.)

10. Question.- "What problems should be considered in a neighborhood meeting?"

Answer 1.- "Our school bus broke down and our children have been out of school for three weeks. We ought to do something about that."

Answer 2.- "If you had a cooperating neighborhood you'd be more liable to get a buyer (for cattle)."

Answer 3.- "We need a truck to get our produce to market."

11. Question.- "Suppose an epidemic should break out this winter, what could be done about it?"

Answer 1.- "We took 'shots' in our community."

Answer 2.- "We need a home nursing course."

Answer 3.- "We are in the Medical Cooperative and my doctor says it isn't paying him for his services."

(The staff explained this problem by stating that two of the twenty-six doctors in the Association had refused to write out the diagnosis on their bills, and that the bills could not be paid until this was done.)

This meeting began at 1:15 P.M. and ended at 3:30 P.M. A staff conference with area and county personnel followed the discussion. Someone commented that there was some danger of discussion groups infringing on Extension work. But it was suggested that under no circumstances should any new formal organizational structure be attempted, and that only those families who are not now participating in some such group activity should be encouraged to do so. It was felt that the farm families themselves would take care of this problem.

The county HM Supervisor told how difficult individual supervision was among some of the borrowers and cited the case of one farmer's wife who said she didn't understand the words "purchase", "major", and "minor", in the farm home record book.

Tyler County

Although the morning meeting of Tyler County leaders was planned well in advance by the district supervisor and the county staff, only three farmers of the twelve invited showed up. None of the wives were in attendance.

Tyler County Leader Discussion Group
November 7, 1942

FSA County Office, Woodville, Texas

<u>Name</u>	<u>Farmers</u>	<u>Age of Head</u>	<u>Type of FSA Borrower or Non-Borrower</u>
1. Herman Poole		50	TP
2. Cecil Ratcliffe		34	RR
3. C. R. Ratcliffe		65	RR

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Max Beasley	County RR Supervisor
2. Bell Nation	County HM Supervisor
3. Robert Nelson	Administrative Assistant
4. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Assistant
5. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

The same procedure was followed as with the previous leader meetings, but discussion was more informal because of the small group. At one time writing pads were secured for the farmers on which they listed the specific things they would need to increase food production with their present supply of family labor. This demonstrated one way by which a group of neighbors might go about pooling their needs for submission to the War Board or other agency.

One farmer defined his neighbors as those families he called in to share his peas and turnips with. Peanuts were reported to be a "flop" last year because of inadequate equipment. Many farmers were leaving to work in the defense plants on the Gulf, but one farmer thought many of them would stay on the farm and produce food if they only had the "means".

1. Question.- "If you had adequate financing how would you plan to produce more food with your present family labor?"

Answer 1.- "Since you put it that way, I'd like to have 10 more cows. This would call for a milking shed and I have enough timber on my farm to build all necessary sheds if I could get permission to cut and use the lumber."

2. Question.- "How would you get 10 more cows milked?"

Answer 1.- "I have eight children."

3. Question.- "How would you get it to market?"

Answer 1.- "A milk truck goes by my door every morning. In fact, he is my brother-in-law. He hauls milk to Beaumont and gets a good price."

4. Question.- "How many real neighbors do you have who could and would produce more food and who need the same type of equipment?"

Answer 1.- "Ten or eleven within a mile or so."

Another farmer stated that he could increase production if he had an adequate water supply for stock and household use. Further questioning revealed this to be a common problem with eight or ten of his closest neighbors.

"Could some of us eastern farmers with our family labor go out to western Texas and help harvest their feed crops?" asked one farmer. "I need more feed and I could be paid partially in feed. I know a number of my neighbors who could do the same thing." It was decided that this problem would be discussed later and more fully at a neighborhood meeting and presented to the War Board.

All three farmers indicated a desire to go back home and call in their neighbors to get some cooperative work started as the need was apparent.

This meeting began at 10:20 A.M. and ended at 12:15 P.M.

Liberty County

The leader discussion group meeting in Liberty County was held at 2:35 P.M. on November 9, 1942. Preceding the meeting, 15 or 20 minutes were given over to informal talk and general introductions; this was particularly helpful in facilitating the subsequent discussion.

Liberty County Leader Discussion Group
November 9, 1942

Jury Room of County Court House, Liberty, Texas

Farmers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type of FSA Borrower or Non-Borrower</u>
1. Loomis Charles	TP Committeeman
2. Mrs. Lubie H. Coe	TP
3. Ira F. Flurey	RR
4. William J. Harlan	TP
5. Dewey A. Poland & wife	RR
6. Joe V. Smesny	TP
7. Ralph E. Stone	TP
8. Justice W. Walters	TP
9. A. J. Murphy	Land Owner

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. John McGrath	County RR Supervisor
2. Lila M. Benson	County HM Supervisor
3. Gordon L. Hart	County Extension Agent
4. Nettie Smith	County Home Demonstration Agent
5. E. A. Gray (Negro)	Vocational Agriculture Teacher
6. A. E. Palmer (Negro)	County Extension Agent
7. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
8. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

Procedure employed in this meeting was similar to that used in the other leader meetings. The county staff was careful to see that the invited farmers occupied the central position around a jury table, with the agency representatives on the outside and at the back. Each farmer was able, therefore, to see all the others and to talk to them freely.

Mr. Massey spent about 15 minutes in preliminary explanation of the purpose of the meeting. This preliminary explanation could perhaps have been shortened somewhat. He said that people in the regional office oftentimes lose touch with what farm people are planning and thinking and that the only way for them to find out is to come out and talk with farmers. He emphasized that he had nothing in particular to suggest or give them but that he was interested in finding out how the farmers are planning to produce enough food to win the war.

Here are a few of the questions and answers which followed:

1. Question.- "Who are your neighbors?"

Answer 1.- "Those families you can call on to help in a crisis."

Answer 2.- "My neighbors are those families I'm in a habit of associating with."

Answer 3.- "We help each other out."

2. Question.- "How many of you have boys in the Service?"

Answer 1.- (By show of hands two of the eight families had boys in the Army.)

3. Question.- "How are we going to feed them?"

Answer 1.- "I'd figger each family can raise enough to feed three families."

Answer 2.- "I raised 93 bales of cotton last year but none this year."

Answer 3.- "People are leaving the farm."

Answer 4.- "I'm short-handed one week and not the next."

Answer 5.- "We need higher ceilings on farm prices."

4. Question.- "Is there a way to produce and market all the food we need?"

Answer 1.- "There's a shortage of labor."

Answer 2.- "There'll be a food shortage in my community."

Answer 3.- "If the kids didn't have to go to school we might raise more."

Answer 4.- "We may have to increase cows and hogs."

Answer 5.- "Practically all the farmers in the county could increase eggs and hogs."

(This exchange brought out very clearly the divergent attitudes and opinions of the large and small farmers. In almost every case the labor problem was more acute with the big farmer than with the little farmer. At first the larger farmers dominated the discussion, but gradually the small farmers were drawn in and a mutual recognition of each other's problem became apparent.)

5. Question.- "How can total production of food be increased without increasing labor requirements?"

Answer 1.- "Change crops, more hogs, chickens, cows."

Answer 2.- "Exchange labor would be one way."

Answer 3.- "The farmer needs cost plus, like industry."

Answer 4.- "Cost of production is about the same as last year."

6. Question.- "What is the doctor situation?"

Answer 1.- "We've lost three doctors, all gone to the Army."

Answer 2.- "There is only one doctor left in Liberty."

Answer 3.- "I've been worrying about that, especially with the tire situation."

7. Question.- "What can be done to remedy this situation?"

Answer 1.- "Home nursing and first aid." (The Home Demonstration Agent stated that a few communities had done something about this.)

Answer 2.- "Short of nurses in the county. No one to give the courses, I guess."

8. Question.- "What organizations do you have in your communities?"

Answer 1.- (No response; finally, Mr. Massey called on the county agent to explain his neighborhood Victory Leader system.) The agent said that they were just completing this organization and have not done anything yet. However, the county has been delineated into 25 communities and 108 neighborhoods. The county agent has appointed a man and woman leader for each neighborhood, to be responsible for 20-30 families each. The purpose, as he explained, was to carry useful information to and from rural people. He stated that it is an impossible task for Extension personnel alone to organize 108 neighborhoods. Such a worth-while endeavor required the help of all the farm leaders and the various organizations. In summing up he said, "If we could get the message we've all heard here this afternoon to all the farmers of Liberty County, it would help the war effort."

9. Question.- "How can this important job of mobilizing farmers be done?"

Answer 1.- "People are more discouraged now than ever before."

Answer 2.- "All the best farmers who have any sense are gone. The little farmer hasn't enough sense to get the job done. Farmers say they are under a dictatorship because of prices."

Answer 3.- "Now, wait a minute. I know we haven't got very much, mostly because we never had much opportunity. But I figure we're just as smart as anybody. You know when it comes right down to it, the little farmer has more patriotism than some of the big boys. We're going to have to forget profits in order to win this war. We're going to produce because it's the patriotic thing to do."

(This last statement was made by the wife of one of the small farmers in response to the preceding statement made by one of the biggest landlords in the county. This landlord later complimented her on her determination and confidence. He appeared to be thoroughly satisfied as to the small farmer's ability.)

10. Question.- "What can be done?"

Answer 1.- A large farmer answered by asking: "How many have written their Congressmen?" and added, "I spent \$20 on telegrams."

11. Question.- "How many farm organizations are there in the county?"

Answer 1.- "Farm Bureau has 125 members."

12. Question.- "How many farmers in the county?"

Answer 1.- "1,700."

(Some discussion then occurred on how farm organizations might increase membership, but little consensus was reached.)

13. Question.- "What are the Negroes doing in the war effort?"

Answer 1.- "Well, we have a Government defense class in one community teaching them how to keep good care of farm machinery. Also, defense classes. The colored county agent has some pigs and classes on poultry.

(This was answered by the Negro vocational agriculture teacher.)

14. Question.- "Can farmers do their planning in groups of neighbors?"

Answer 1.- "Couldn't we plan some planting of vegetables so as to keep the local market well supplied?"

Answer 2.- "If every farmer would agree to milk three more cows, think what that would mean."

Answer 3.- "'Course we can unite on a program, but not all do the same thing -- unity, not uniformity, that's right."

Answer 4.- "Now take my neighborhood. We have three or four religions and as many nationalities."

Answer 5.- "A person has just so much influence over a few people. We ought to start with that. That's why this neighborhood thing appeals to me."

15. Question.- "How are you going to keep a record of what you do?"

Answer 1.- "Keep minutes or something."

The meeting began at 2:35 P.M. and ended at 5:10 P.M. A majority of the leaders present indicated a desire to go home, talk it over with their neighbors, and invite them to their homes for further discussion and planning.

WEST TEXAS

West Texas counties which were visited included: Cooke, Bosque, Hamilton San Saba, and Bexar. Districts represented by these 5 counties and their respective RR supervisors are: District VIII, Wesley Grote; District X, Paul M. Helms; District XI, Carl P. Emmett; District XIII, Charles M. Richter.

Area specialists cooperating included: Henry L. Gantz of the Southern Range Area, and W. M. Burkes of the Texas Black Waxy Area. Area HM supervisors taking part included Lena W. Taylor of the Southern Range Area, and Willie Mae Dunham of the Texas Black Waxy Area.

Cooke County

An afternoon meeting of FSA farm leaders was scheduled at Gainesville, Texas, on November 30, but through unavoidable circumstances (mail delayed) the county supervisor did not receive notice of the specified time of meeting from his district supervisor; consequently, when Mr. Massey and Mr. Longmore arrived final arrangements had not been made.

However, a number of standard RR borrowers happened to be in the county office making 1943 farm plans and they were invited to meet with the visitors, including Henry L. Gantz, Area Specialist. Six families accepted the invitation and at 3:30 P. M. an informal discussion meeting was held in the county office.

Cooke County Leader Group Discussion

November 30, 1942

FSA County Office, Gainesville, Texas

<u>Farmers</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Age of Head</u>	<u>Type of FSA Borrower or Non-Borrower</u>
1. Glenn Bewley & wife	33	RR
2. Hubert W. Dennis & wife	34	RR
3. Jack C. Gunter & wife	41	RR
4. Orben Potts & wife	30	RR
5. Claude Smith	56	RR
6. Kenneth K. Williams	36	RR

<u>Others</u>	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Glenn H. Mitchell	County RR Supervisor
2. Estelle True	County HM Supervisor
3. Henry Gantz	Area Specialist
4. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
5. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

The general plan of meeting employed in East Texas counties was used again in this case. The group was an average group of borrowers in Cooke County and was fairly representative of the various areas of the County. The situation was unique in that no chance for selection of "top" leaders was given. Furthermore, the leaders had little opportunity to develop preconceived ideas as to the purpose of the meeting. Hence, the meeting was more informal and spontaneous from the beginning than many of the preceding meetings described.

One young farmer took a standing position at the door and when invited to come in and sit down he replied, "Nope, I've just got a few minutes. I'll stand here." Indicative of the interest developed was the fact that this individual stayed for the entire discussion, a period of approximately two hours. He stood on one foot, then the other, made his own contributions to the discussion, and finally was jokingly reprimanded by his wife for staying so long.

Some of the most significant questions and answers are reviewed below:

1. Question.- "What can farmers do to increase food production while not increasing their labor requirements?"

Answer 1.- "I started with FSA 3 years ago, had 5 chickens, and 90 acres of land. Now we have 150 chickens and 280 acres of land. I did have two tenants on the place, but one went to defense work and the other to the Army. I'm still going to carry on and produce more livestock."

Answer 2.- "Help each other more."

Explanation.- "What can you do as a group? You know the family is the first social group, then groups of families make up a neighborhood."

Answer 1.- "Most of the farmers are going into hogs and cattle."

Answer 2.- "Christ had twelve apostles. It doesn't take many people to start a thing."

Answer 3.- "I help my neighbor, he helps me. I borrow from those close around me."

Answer 4.- "We'll have to do more cooperating. I don't know what more we can do though."

2. Question.- "Do some people look down on FSA borrowers?"

Answer 1.- "Yes, but I feel as good or better than they."

Answer 2.- "We're going to help win this war. The little farmer is going to have to produce what the big farmer can't."

3. Question.- "How many doctors have left the county?" (Lack of recognition of the medical situation as a problem was apparent. None of the communities represented had conducted first aid or home nursing courses.) As the discussion progressed it was apparent that each farmer was thinking of his problems as an individual. For example, it was brought out that each farmer carried his own eggs and cream to market and consequently each had a pickup. No pooling of produce for marketing purposes was indicated. This discussion occurred just before gas rationing went into effect and little thought of its probable effects on the farming operations was in evidence.

4. Question.- "How can FSA do the job you want it to do?"

Answer 1.- "It's sure doing everything I want."

Answer 2.- "We could help our neighbors to know more about what FSA is doing. Some of them have been asking me about what FSA is able to do. I didn't know what to tell them."

5. Question.- "How can you folks help FSA do this war food production job? Do you think the farmer wants someone to come out and tell him what to do?"

Answer 1.- "Not go out and tell 'em what to do. But go out as if you loved them and try to help them."

Answer 2.- "Isn't it better for neighbors to do some planning and then call in some of the agencies."

6. Question.- "How are you going to show people that you are united and making progress?"

Answer 1.- "By keeping a record of what happens."

7. Question.- "Would you call a meeting at your home or at the schoolhouse?"

Answer 1.- "At home, then I'd know who was gonna get there."

8. Question.- "Do people visit as much as they used to?"

Answer 1.- "No. Too many cars and movies."

During a staff conference which followed it was disclosed that less than 25 percent of the FSA borrowers' wives were members of Home Demonstration Clubs. Very few of the FSA families are at present being reached by farm organizations or the Extension Service.

As a direct result of the office discussion with FSA families Mr. Orben Potts, a farmer in Hemming community, decided to call in five of his

neighbors for a discussion group meeting. He notified the county staff of the meeting night and asked that they bring out a few chairs, especially if Mr. Massey and Mr. Longmore planned to attend. Both the county agent and home demonstration agent were also invited.

On December 7, 1942, at 8:00 P.M. Mr. Potts' five neighbors, the county staff, the home demonstration agent, the husband of the county HM supervisor, Mr. Massey and Mr. Longmore attended the discussion group in Mr. Potts' farm home.^{3/}

The visitors were met in the front yard by Mr. Potts and escorted to the front door where Mrs. Potts met them with the greeting, "My, we're sure proud you came."

Inside the farm house all the neighbors were comfortably seated in the living room. Much visiting had preceded the arrival of the visitors. A boxwood stove made the room comfortable. The room was lighted with electricity. The house was "spic and span" and indicated keen pride in the home on the part of the housewife. Most farm people are "natural" hosts and the ease with which the Potts accommodated the fifteen older people and five children to the limitations of their small but comfortable home. was remarkable. Within 5 minutes everyone was at ease and talking freely.

To begin the evening session Mrs. Potts asked everyone to arise and sing "God Bless America" led by a neighbor, Mr. Beavers. Mr. Beavers broke forth lustily with the opening bars and everyone joined in. The pitch was high, but there was no turning back, and the group faithfully carried on regardless of the occasional dissonance.

Mrs. Potts then gave two readings concerning the farmers place in the war effort, which were particularly appropriate to the discussion which followed. One deterring factor in the progress of discussion was the expectation on the part of the neighbors that they had "come over" to be entertained.

Mr. Potts assumed leadership in the meeting after the opening entertainment and then asked Mr. Massey to start the discussion.

Out of the discussion which followed it was indicated that there had been a labor shortage in the neighborhood during harvest season but no particular loss of crops. However, a terrific flood last spring had washed out many fields and farmers were badly hurt.

An elderly neighbor said he was going out of cotton and was revamping his farming plan to increase livestock. He thought the Government should allow prices to rise so that farm labor could be held on the farms. When asked, "Would increased wages to farm laborers assure farmers in the neighborhood of more laborers?" he admitted that it probably would not. This observation was concurred in by all present.

^{3/} Those present included: Mr. & Mrs. Orben Potts (host); Mr. & Mrs. J.C. Southard; Mrs. Vernie Cook; Mr. & Mrs. Harris R. Daniels; Mr. & Mrs. Painter Beavers; Mr. P. Beavers; Miss Nette Shultz, Home Demonstration Agent; Mrs. Estelle Trew, HM Supervisor; Mr. C. Trew; Glenn H. Mitchell, RR Supervisor; Homer L. Massey, and T. Wilson Longmore.

This led the group to agree that farmers would have to get along next year with about the same amount of labor, or less, as last year. In order to keep up production this would necessitate use of more machinery and more cooperative work. No plans had yet been made for such an eventuality but they all thought that the way to make such plans and carry them out was through groups of neighbors such as those present.

Cooperation in this neighborhood appeared to be on a highly "rational" basis and individualism was an outstanding trait of most of the farm families. Some of the farmers in the group constantly referred to other families in their community as uncooperative and lacking in initiative. They thought something ought to be done to force these inefficient and unsociable people to fit into the war production program. They disliked having the Government do this but proposed no alternative course of action.

The question was asked "How effective is the war time community organization in drawing all farmers into full participation?" In reply it was brought out that the community was organized for some purposes but only a very small percentage of the families took part. Furthermore, their home demonstration club had become inactive but they believed as a result of this discussion some effort would be made to revive it. This meeting was the only neighborhood gathering of the men that they could recall having been held.

One story of the advantages of cooperative marketing was cited. A group of neighbors had decided to market hogs together and as a result the price received was increased from 18 cents to 25 cents. However, the recounting of such instances as this was qualified by statements such as:

"Farmers are individualists. They plan as individuals."

"Farmers don't stick together."

This led into a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of farmer organizations. One elderly man said he felt the Farm Bureau was the only farm organization representing the farmer because of its stand on the "parity price." Less vocal neighbors suggested that since everyone else was organized it might be a good idea for farmers to organize. No references to any particular farm organization seemed to evoke any warm response among them, although Mr. Trew, a Farm Bureau official and husband of the county HM supervisor, explained in some detail the problems confronting the organization of a Farm Bureau in Cooke County. Particularly, it developed that only a very small minority of the farmers were Farm Bureau members and the county organization had not met for a number of months.

Everyone felt that the discussion meeting had been a success and someone suggested that some other family hold another in the near future. The women made a direct request to the county home demonstration agent for a revival of the home demonstration club. After the meeting closed the following comment was made, "We FSA borrowers have two demonstrators helping us - the home demonstration agent and the HM supervisor. We're sure lucky."

Throughout the discussion proper it was apparent that the group was somewhat puzzled as to what Mr. Massey was aiming at in his questions. In other words, they were obviously trying to give answers which they thought Mr. Massey and the county FSA staff wished them to give. It was difficult to break down this parrying attitude and get the members of the group to express themselves freely.

Bosque County

In Bosque County the county staff was prepared for the neighborhood approach by a brief preliminary discussion of the procedure usually followed, after which the necessary preparations were made.

After careful study of the various neighborhoods the county staff selected an FSA borrower whose home is a "natural neighborhood center" where a number of families of Norwegian descent are accustomed to visit. This family was visited on Sunday afternoon on the excuse of a visit to inquire about the condition of the borrower's health, since he had been ill during the preceding week.

In the course of this visit current problems facing the neighborhood were discussed and the borrower agreed to call a meeting of nine of his neighbors for discussion of some of these common problems related to the war effort. It was emphasized that the meeting need not be exclusively an FSA meeting.

Every family whom Mr. & Mrs. Anderson had invited on the night of December 3 was present.^{4/} After a period of approximately 30 minutes of neighborly chatting the meeting was called to order by the host. He asked for a discussion of the problems facing the farmers in the neighborhood.

The advantages of such home meetings of neighbors over schoolhouse meetings were discussed. No one made a speech. One person remarked, "I'm too timid to talk in a big meeting." Many farm problems were mentioned in the course of the evening but before a solution could be offered, Mr. Massey directed the discussion to another problem, thereby keeping constantly before the group the importance of additional meetings to work out solutions.

Problems raised included scarcity of doctors, meeting the farm labor shortage, need of a local egg and milk route, scarcity of tenants to farm good land, gasoline rationing, availability of feed, and 1943 war crops.

A former FSA borrower cited an illustration of what he considered to be a lack of "follow-up" on the part of Government agencies. As an experimental procedure he had been selected by the local AAA to plant one acre of Castor Beans. He was supplied with seed and he planned and cultivated the beans, but up to the present no one had contacted him further or advised him what to do with them.

Another farmer mentioned that some governmental agencies were recommending soy beans for central Texas Black Land. He said that on the other hand he had received reports from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station at Denton that they were unable to find a suitable variety for the area.

^{4/} Those present included: Mr. & Mrs. Bernt Anderson (host and hostess); Mr. & Mrs. Belford Colwick; Mr. & Mrs. Henry O. McAdams; Mr. & Mrs. Otto Nygaard; Mr. & Mrs. Jeff C. Fergerson; Mr. & Mrs. Kundson; Mr. & Mrs. Logstad; Mr. & Mrs. Grinland; Mrs. Herman Carlson; Mr. & Mrs. Hastings; W. Marion Burkes, Area Specialist; Willie Mae Dunham, Area HM Supervisor; Robert A. Weil, RR Supervisor; Miss Tennie M. Layman, HM Supervisor; Wadie L. Milburn, JR, Clerk-Typist; Homer L. Massey, FSA; T. Wilson Longmore, BAE. All but one of the families lived within a radius of 2 miles. They included four RR borrowers, one TP, and five non-borrowers. Ages of the heads of families of the FSA families varied from 41 to 52 years.

Women said they could increase egg production materially but feed was too high. Feed for chickens is also getting scarce and any change in formula cuts egg production. A plan for pooling the marketing of produce and purchasing of feed was suggested. It was pointed out that the same truck could be used to transport eggs to town and bring feed back. The community had a community thrasher last year and pooled sales of wool.

The meeting lasted almost 3 hours. It adjourned 2 or 3 times but no one seemed anxious to leave. Children ran through the house and played outside without in the least distracting attention from the discussion. The president of the County Farm Bureau was one of the neighbors in attendance. Some of the families brought their chairs.

The host and hostess mentioned in subsequent conversation that a TP family living very close did not take an active part in neighborhood affairs and they debated a long time before inviting them to the meeting.

In commenting on the discussion later one person said, "You've put a stick in the hornet's nest."

Plans were made to hold more meetings of this type and someone remarked, "We will need a chairman."

Hamilton county

On December 2, 1942, at 8:00 P.M. seven farm families met in the jury room of the County Court House. They represented a fair cross section of Hamilton County. The farm families arranged themselves around one of the long tables and the Government personnel occupied seats outside the circle.

A near verbatim account of this discussion was made by Octavia Hunt. It is inserted here with a minimum of comment.

Hamilton County Leader Discussion Group

December 2, 1942

No. 1 Jury Room in County Court House, Hamilton, Texas

Farmers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age of Head</u>	<u>Type of FSA Member or Non-Member</u>
1. A. L. Bullard & wife	59	RR
2. I. H. Coston & wife	48	TP
3. B. E. Cowling & wife	47	RR
4. John Dunlop & wife	60	RR
5. W. C. Gardner	46	TP
6. E. N. Lambert & wife (also Mrs. Bush)	36	TP
7. C. O. Loyd & wife	43	RR

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Wilburn H. Denham	County RR Supervisor
2. Rosa L. Butler	County HM Supervisor
3. Octavia Hunt	Jr. Clerk Typist
4. T. D. Craddock	County Extension Agent
5. Gwendolyn Jones	County Home Demonstration Agent
6. Homer L. Massey	FSA
7. T. Wilson Longmore	BAE

Mr. Denham, The RR supervisor, called the group to order and introduced Homer Massey. "He is here to talk to you and with you; we want everyone to talk because the meeting is really yours. We also have Mr. Longmore with us."

Mr. M. - "Let's all get as closely as possible around the table. I am from the regional office. We want to know just what people think and how they are going about solving their problems. The only information we can get is when we call on a staff for a report."

"Of course, you know how anyone likes to make a report. It is rather an unusual privilege for us to be able to get with groups such as you to see just what you people think and how you plan to approach a solution to a great problem, the winning of the war. You know that is about all anyone of you think about now. Do you think we can win this war?"

(General answer of yes.)

"I think every other person thinks we are going to win this war, but it is now up to us. Before we get any further, I would like to know just who you are and what part of the county you are from."

Mr. L. - "I am from the Fairy Community."

Mr. M. - "About how many farmers in that community?"

Mr. L. - "Twenty farmers."

Mr. M. - "What size school?"

Mr. L. - "High school."

Mr. B. - "I'm from the Springdale Community."

Mr. M. - "What is that, a school community?"

Mr. B. - "It used to be, but it's consolidated with Pottsville. One of those used-to-be's."

Mr. M. - "How many in the district?"

Mr. B. - "Somewhere near forty."

Mr. M. - "Is there a church there?"

Mr. B. - "No."

Mr. G. - "I'm from Blueridge, southeast of town, 4 miles from school and church."

Mr. M. - "About how many farmers in your particular community?"

Mr. B. - "Oh, quite a bunch - in round numbers, I guess 30 farmers or more."

Mr. O. - "I live 6 miles west of town."

Mr. M. - "Is that a community?"

Mr. O. - "A community but not a school or church. Just an old community."

Mr. M. - "About how many farmers that you call in your community?"

Mr. O. - "Aw, there is about 35."

Mr. C. - "We live in the same community with Mr. O. Close enough to really know a lot about him."

Mr. S. - "We live at Shive, kind of southwest, 8 miles southwest. It is a consolidated school, quite a school district, and I think they have about 4 or 5 teachers."

Mr. J. - "I'm the home demonstration agent of the county."

Mrs. O. - "That was my husband that you just talked to."

Mr. M. - "Oh, he got in the first word this time."

Mrs. O. - "He may have this time, but it will not be the last one."

Mr. S. - "You met me."

Mr. J. - "I'm from Lum Valley." (Mr. J. is retiring from farming this year.)

Mr. L. - "How many of you have sons in the service?" (5 hands. Mr. D, 2 sons; Mr. L. 3 sons.)

Mr. M. - "Well, there is something all of us are being called on to do in some ways, and the whole Nation is called on to do something that we did not think was possible. You know we talk in terms of Armed Forces of 10,000,000 men. That is a lot of men and that is going to call for a lot of other things. One thing is feeding the Armed Forces and along with it feeding the entire world. Is it possible, do you people think, that we can feed the entire world."

- Mr. L. - "We can try."
- Mr. C. - "That is what I say, we can try!"
- Mr. M. - "You know that is a pretty big undertaking. Actually, there are 1 3/4 million farmers less this year than there were last year. The Army and the Armed Forces and defense projects of all types have called laborers into the various ranks and farm laborers are pretty hard to get. If you had a labor shortage in your community last year, you will have a still larger one next year."
- Mr. J. - "I had a hard time getting cotton picked. When the labor was here we couldn't pay for it. Now there are no laborers at any cost."
- Mr. M. - "What other labor problems do you have?"
- Mr. S. - "That is mostly what I have."
- Mr. O. - "There is going to be a shortage more than last year. I had to take turns this year."
- Mrs. L. - "I've done a lot of things I've never done before; the wives are going to have to work next year. I drove the tractor this year when we could not get help."
- Mr. S. - "I'm not the farm hand that I used to be, but I have had to do more of it the last year."
- Mr. M. - "You know the large farmer is really in deep water. It is almost impossible out on the plains area and in the vegetable area and in the large grain area to get the work done. In the face of labor shortage, in the face of all the other things that we have, is it still going to be possible for the small farmer, the average farmers of the nation, to take the place of the large farmers? Can you produce enough food to win this war without increasing your labor requirements and with what you have to work with?"
- Mr. S. - "That depends on what we have to plant. If we forget cotton we can find time to raise pork and chickens."
- Mr. M. - "How many acres do you try to have?"
- Mr. S. - "29 in cotton."
- Mr. M. - "You could change your crop planning a little bit and gather what you have yourself?"
- Mr. O. - "Most farmers are single handed. If we leave off row crops, such as cotton, then we would have time to feed livestock."
- Mr. M. - "That is a good thought. I like to hear you express yourselves. It is pretty necessary that we have the hands to work and other things that it takes to win this war. Many of the laborers are going off to the defense jobs for more money. All of that is not easy money. Have any of you been around some camps where they are so congested? They won't have as much as you will in some cases."
- Mr. O. - "You could get an argument out of me."
- Mr. M. - "Do people neighbor as much as they used to?"
- Mr. B. - "No, they haven't got time."
- Mr. C. - "They haven't got casings and gasoline for the car."
- Mr. M. - "Did they before?"
- Mr. C. - "No."
- Mrs. J. - "They don't have time to really visit."
- Mr. O. - "We are going to have plenty of time this winter."
- Mr. M. - "This nation-wide emergency will cause us to face the task of bringing people closer together than they have been in a long time. You know, when you and your neighbor's son leaves for the Army, does it not bring you closer together? Can a program be worked out to feed the Army and the entire world? How can those things be

brought about? What means will be necessary or what would you recommend? Now actually the first social unit that we have is the family - the father, mother, and children; the next is a group of families called a neighborhood. In other words, groups of families make neighborhoods and a group neighborhoods make a community. Just who are your neighbors? You know better than I do."

Mrs. S. - "You have got to be a neighbor to have one."

Mr. M. - "Could you draw a line around your neighbors?"

Mr. O. - "Doesn't always mean the closest 'neighbor'. Meetings are hard to get to function because one or two simply try to run the show and the 90 percent do not have a part."

Mrs. C. - "They run it, and run it in the ground."

Mr. M. - "Do you talk to your neighbors before you go to a meeting?"

Mr. O. - "No, we don't, but we should. They really feel that they are on the outside."

Mr. M. - "Really then, ten percent of the farmers in the community are members of the Extension clubs, Sunday School teachers, County Red Cross, AAA, and the various committees, and the ninety percent are wondering what it is all about. Is that right?"

Mrs. C. - "I have had an idea all of the time that if we could just get some of these people out and let the common people run things, we would be better off. It reminds me of a story I heard a preacher tell. Some men were trying to load up a carload of cattle and a few cows got on a speckled cow with long, sharp horns got in the door and they couldn't move her in and they couldn't move her out. We've got people in our community just like that old speckled cow." (This story was agreed to by another family living in this community.)

Mr. J. - "We have always had one of the finest communities. We have more men on FSA; we have cooperated in everything, have been behind the Government in its programs, and we have the very finest community."

Mr. M. - "Do people feel as free to talk and discuss problems in a school-house, or is it better in a home?"

Mrs. C. - "I think it is better in the home. We have had some good meetings at the school but when the professional leaders open their mouths everyone else closes theirs."

Mr. M. - "Wonder why they do not talk as much in school?"

Mrs. J. - "There are no children and you can't run school without schoolastics. Our schools have actually gone."

Mr. O. - "We have ten percent that cooperate and ninety percent that do not. If we are going to produce more food, we could get somewhere faster if they all cooperated."

Mr. M. - "How can you get at all persons?"

Mr. O. - "Get closest friends."

Mr. M. - "How many usually?"

Mrs. S. - "Five or eight."

Mrs. J. - "I think that it takes young folks to make a community."

Mr. M. - "How is the best way to approach your neighbor to get him to help win this war?"

Mr. O. - "If Miss Jones (Home Demonstration Agent) could do three women's work - we need cooperation."

Mr. M. - "Do you think it would be better for someone to tell farmers what to do, what to plant, or will farmers plan a program that will do? What do you think?"

- Mr. C. - "I raised things last year, and they went to waste because I could not put them up and my neighbors did not want any more of them."
- Miss J. - "The school lunch room could have used them."
- Mr. M. - "It might be better to grow for home use since you don't have a market outlet. Is that the only food in the war effort - livestock, poultry? How can you approach it to get one hundred percent participation?"
- Mr. O. - "Pretty hard - 10 percent cooperate with Government agencies and do not mind being told what to do, but other ninety percent fight it."
- Mr. J. - "Hamilton County has made great strides in all programs. Mr. L. you tell something about your community."
- Mr. L. - "We've used more garden stuff - chickens, turkeys, calves."
- Mr. M. - "Have you had meetings of your own accord?"
- Mr. L. - "No."
- Mr. M. - "Do you think the people will come out to meet in your community?"
- Mr. L. - "Some people will not do anything."
- Mr. M. - "How far is the farthest family from you?"
- Mr. L. - "Three - two - four miles."
- Mr. M. - "Do you think your neighbors would meet?"
- Mr. B. - "I don't know, we have had meetings in the schoolhouse, such as Soil Conservation, and they did not come."
- Mr. Craddock (County Agent) - "What I want to see done for the community is for them to organize and meet at a regular period. Then have all the agencies there and have all the people there. All of their questions can be answered at this time. Have everyone there at one time. Let us just listen. Start with your neighbors. What can spread faster than your neighborhood efforts?" (Mr. Craddock gave a summary of those countries having control of gasoline and rubber. Showed chart.)
- Mr. M. - "How do farmers want to go about solving this problem of producing food for the war?"
- Mr. C. - "Do you want organization or pledges?"
- Mr. M. - "No, we want to know if farmers can do their own planning. Isn't group strength stronger than individuals?"
- Mr. B. - "Unless we plant our cotton quota we will lose our AAA payment. Saw that in the paper yesterday."
- Mr. C. - "Why doesn't FSA and the County Agent do something about that? Very few farmers will get their AAA payment."
- Mr. M. - "Wouldn't it be better for a group of farmers to get together and contact AAA than it would be for any FSA official or County Agent to do it?"
- Mr. B. - "I guess so."
- (Discussion of how to go about cooperating to work things out.)
- Mr. L. - "Get FSA farmers to cooperate and have meetings."
- Mr. M. - "What would happen?"
- Mr. C. - "It would spread pretty fast."
- Mr. O. - "There is a problem of interesting them."
- Mr. M. - "Could you have your meeting for the specific purpose of planning to produce more food? Can we do better as a separate group or individually, or does a uniform ruling apply as in AAA?"
- Mr. B. - "Mr. L. offered a good suggestion. Maybe as a group, they could get more done."
- Mrs. L. - "It would help if they could get the school teachers and children interested, such as when the children collected scrap."
- Mr. M. - "What about no doctors? Meat sharing program, and other problems?"

- Mr. O. - "We have some place to go for advice (meaning to FSA personnel) and the others do not have a place to go."
- Mr. M. - "How many people are willing to take the responsibility of calling their neighbors in to discuss and plan how to meet these problems?"
- Mrs. L. - "We are willing to do what we can; get the teachers interested and get them to help."
- Mrs. O. - "We drew names last week in our club (Home Demonstration Club) for next person to be hostess."
- Mr. Craddock - "All government people could attend the meeting in one car."
- Mr. O. - "More men could attend night meetings."
- Mr. L. - "Is it possible for us not to tell people what they should do, but just ask a number of questions to find out what people want to do?"
- Miss Jones - "We need people's wants and suggestions."
- Mr. M. - "I have enjoyed meeting with you and hearing your discussion and ideas. Just remember that there is first a family, a group of families, or neighborhoods, finally, groups of neighborhoods make up the community. How many people can lose their personal identity in working for a common program?"

Mr. Denham thanked the people for coming and for their contribution. He suggested that Mr. Massey could be back on next Wednesday night if someone would be interested in having a neighborhood meeting in the home.

Commenting later one of the observers (County Agent) remarked that only a few years ago none of these people were able to assume their place in the community, but it appeared they were now eager and willing to do so.

A staff conference was held at which time the neighborhood approach was reviewed and information on the county secured. Mr. Massey commented as follows: "Who am I to suggest to farmers who have lived so long in their neighborhood just who their neighbors are? We have been obliged to segregate our FSA borrowers to some extent but that should not prevent them from working together with their neighbors. In some cases they ask for home demonstration clubs and 4-H clubs. That is where FSA can help extension with their program and help farm people get what they want."

The FSA staff said that the 200 borrowers in the county were going to keep them very busy and that some way must be found to get borrowers to make their needs known through a group in an organized fashion. The following story was told in illustration of what could happen.

A group of Negroes in east Texas worked up a peanut threshing crew. One day the HM Supervisor attended a meeting of the Thresher Cooperative at which both men and women were present. One of the wives casually remarked, "Wouldn't it be fine if we could make some peanut butter just like we buy up town. Raising all these peanuts, suppose anybody knows how to do it?"

The HM Supervisor answered, "Sure. I can!"

"You mean you can make peanut butter just like we gets at the store, Miss Winter? Ah sure do wish you could teach us. We's sure get all these colored folks together and have everything ready."

Plans were accordingly made for a demonstration in peanut butter making. The corollary effects of group action were illustrated by the observation that in Negro neighborhoods it is very seldom that they lock doors and barns. Asked by a white person why locking was unnecessary the reply was, "We know no one will take anything because everybody is locking and keeping track!"

Another significant comment made at their conference was, "We're (FSA) the only people who have put "money" into an educational program. Fair Tompkins says "Ideas must also have hands and feet."

The following question was posed: "Could farm people set up their own FSA program if FSA passed out of the picture?"

In trying to answer this an illustration was cited of a group of low-income farmers who made up their own cooperative budget by conducting their own survey. When the facts were ascertained in terms of units of measurement, such as bushels, tons, pounds, etc., and accountant spent a day or so in translating these farmer estimates into a financial statement.

Mr. and Mrs. E. N. Lambert, TP borrowers, notified the county FSA staff of their intentions to call a meeting of their neighbors. As a result, five of the Lamberts' neighbors came to see them on the night of December 9.^{5/}

The group met in the front room of the home. The night was crisp but a boxwood heater provided ample warmth inside. It was necessary from time to time for the persons nearest the stove to exchange seats with someone in order not to become too warm.

The plan of meeting was similar to that followed in other groups. The host explained briefly why they had taken it upon themselves to invite their neighbors to come over. He then introduced the FSA RR supervisor who in turn introduced the guests. Mr. Massey, through a series of questions, then developed the discussion.

The discussion was somewhat handicapped by the variation in ages of the families present. The host and three of his neighbors were quite young while the remainder were elderly persons. The older persons tended to dominate the discussion and the deference shown them by the young couples was obvious.

This group had carried on very little cooperation in the past. A woman's club was active in the neighborhood but served only as a social outlet, carrying on quilting and sewing activities. There was no active war organization in the community. The scrap metal drive was carried on by the schools.

5/Those present included: Mr. and Mrs. Lambert (host and hostess); Mrs. Bush; Mr. and Mrs. Aikens; Mr. and Mrs. Juggars; Mr. and Mrs. Clark; Mrs. Fields; Gwendolyn Jones, County Home Demonstration Agent; Carl P. Emmett, District FSA Supervisor; Wilburn H. Denham, RR Supervisor; Rosa L. Butler, HM Supervisor; Octavia Hunt, Jr. Clerk-Typist; S. A. Dean, Farm Ownership Division; Homer L. Massey, FSA, T. Wilson Longmore, EAE. All families lived in a radius of 2½ miles. Only one 36-year old farmer and his wife were FSA borrowers.

To give point to the interest shown in the metal drive on of the women told how her daughter had collected nails from the barnyard and just when the collector was to come by she fell sick. On the collection day she remarked, "Mother, don't let them go off without getting my nails "

During the week preceding this meeting the first Victory Leader program had been carried out. The neighborhood Victory Leader had passed out literature on "Share the Meat" program.

The most significant problem on which the group thought group action might be taken was in marketing vegetables at Hamilton. One wife said, "I marketed \$3 worth of okra last year. Felt pretty good about it." It was decided to find out what facilities were available at Hamilton to handle produce and then plan some gardens together. This was a project which appealed to the wives.

All were concerned over the loss of doctors to the Services and it was decided to investigate the possibility of securing a home nursing or first aid course.

Mrs. Lambert's mother was in attendance and she complimented the FSA personnel on the fine job they had been doing with the Lamberts. She referred to "the Government farm" at which point Mr. Massey asked the question why it was that people referred to TP farms as "Government farms." The elderly lady replied, "Well, don't the supervisors tell you (Mr. and Mrs. Lambert) what ought to be done, making out plans and so forth."

In reply the young TP farmer graciously replied, "Well, that's just about right, Grandma. We do get lots of help from the supervisors but all the Government did was loan me the money to buy the farm. It's my farm and it's up to me from then on. No different than any bank in that respect."

The discussion ended at 10:00 p.m. with plans tentatively set to get together for another discussion before final plans were made for the 1943 crop year. In conversation with the young couple operating the TP farm it was found that they had moved into the neighborhood a year ago and in that time had made very few contacts. The young man stated that this was his first attempt to bring about a more cooperative approach to neighborhood problems and he liked it. He was proud of his home and of his farm. He hoped that this meeting would inspire his neighbors to do the same thing and thus break down some of the isolation. (Later someone raised the question as to whether this young couple had not performed as real a service to our democracy by calling in their neighbors as that rendered by an air raid warden. Perhaps some means might be employed to give public recognition to such "Paul Reveres").

A leader discussion group was held in the FSA office at San Saba on December 3 at 7:30 p.m. All the farmers and their wives seated themselves around a long table while the agency representatives assumed a position outside the circle.

San Saba County Leader Discussion Group
December 3, 1942
FSA County Office, San Saba, Texas

Farmers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age of Head</u>	<u>Type of FSA Borrower</u> <u>and Loan Purpose</u>
1. Homer Fant & wife	43	RR
2. Claude Gage & wife	32	RR
3. Albert Grumbles & wife	34	TP
4. Norman Hardy & wife	30	RR
5. William Hardy & wife	34	RR
6. Mofford Shumate & wife	33	RR
7. John Stoner & wife	59	RR

Others

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. Sam R. Ellison	County RR Supervisor
2. Cora Lee Franks	County RR Supervisor
3. Geraldine Key	Jr. Clerk-typist
4. Homer L. Massey	Cooperative Specialist
5. T. Wilson Longmore	Bureau of Agricultural Economics

It is highly significant that in this discussion all the farm wives were present and some brought their children. Subsequent discussion confirmed the conjecture that the status of women in the social structure was high and that the general enlightenment and culture of the community was correspondingly high.

The plan of meeting corresponded to that used in other counties. A cursory examination of communities in the county revealed that they usually center around a school and the settlement pattern consists of four or five neighboring families within a radius of 1 mile.

Significant questions and answers follow:

1. Question - "Can the little farmer produce enough food to win this war?"

Answer 1 - "Guess he can if he can harvest peanuts like he did this year."

Answer 2 - "Certainly he can, if he just would."

Answer 3 - "We could produce a lot that the Government needs but we lack transportation."

2. Question - "Has the war forced you to cooperate in getting things to market?"

Answer 1 - "Not yet."

Answer 2 - "By swapping work some of my neighbors get the work done. But that isn't bringing them any closer together."

Answer 3 - "Sure can tell who your neighbor is when you need help."

Answer 4 - "People are not conscious of the terrible situation."

3. Question - "Whose responsibility is it to make people conscious of the gigantic war program?"

Answer 1 - "Farmers usually respond when called upon." (Through a series of incidental questions some attempt was made to get those present to assume some of responsibility. This they did, one person stating, "Guess we are as much to blame as anyone. We don't want the government telling us what we can and cannot do.")

4. Question - "Who is chairman of the county war board?"
(One person thought he knew but had forgotten his name.)

5. Question - "What can people do to arouse more vigorous participation in the war effort?"

Answer 1 - "Look out for ourselves. Each individual must work it out for himself."

6. Question - "Do you have a few families about you who would go in with you to help produce the necessary foods?"

Answer 1 - "Yes. We swap around. I've got a tractor. We just start in and make the rounds putting the crops in. Last year we all put up a windmill together."

Answer 2.- "Now we had a chili supper at the schoolhouse. Two or three neighbors got together and called 'em in. That started everything off. First thing we knew the menfolk wanted to come to the supper to arrange for peanut harvest. If we women hadn't been talking nothing would have been done. We've started to paint the church house as a result, too. Decided on it after Sunday School one Sunday." (It was learned later that the men had made plans for peanut harvest and through cooperative action had secured what they considered to be a reasonable price for harvesting from an outside thresher.)

7. Question - "Will people talk as much at a schoolhouse meeting as in homes?"

Answer 1 - "No, that's why we started this with only two or three women."

8. Question - "What is the biggest problem facing you people?"

Answer 1 - "Getting the crops gathered."

Answer 2 - "I'm moving on a strange place, that's my trouble."

Answer 3 - "Our community is dead. Maybe we can start something like this lady says they did in her community."

9. Question - "How many belong to home demonstration clubs?" (Two by show of hands.)

Answer 1 - "Many of the people in my community don't know anything about Extension, or anything."

Bexar County

A group leadership meeting was held in the San Antonio, Texas, Bexar County Office on December 4, 1942, at 7:30 p.m. ^{6/} The purpose of this meeting was to give the borrowers of the Farm Security Administration a clearer understanding as to the vital part which they might play in the war program. They were also to consider the importance of group meetings in planning the production of food necessary to win this war.

Bexar County Leader Discussion Group
December 4, 1942
FSA County Office, San Antonio, Texas

Farmers

1. Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Crow, Route 1, Elmendorf, Texas
2. Mr. & Mrs. Herbert E. Retzliff, Route 1, Marion, Texas
3. Mr. & Mrs. Alonzo Wesch, Route 1, Adkins, Texas
4. Mr. & Mrs. Bee T. Kurz, Route 5, San Antonio, Texas
5. Mr. Robert E. Husky, Route 1, Lytle, Texas
6. Mr. & Mrs. Willie Barthold, Route 1, Converse, Texas
7. Mr. & Mrs. Fritz Schwenn, Route 1, Converse, Texas
8. Mr. & Mrs. C. W. Suggs, Route 1, Fairy, Texas

<u>Name</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Title</u>
1. John Jackson		County RR Supervisor
2. Jimmie Morgan		County HM Supervisor
3. Josephine Bailey		Jr. Clerk-Typist
4. Homer L. Massey		Cooperative Specialist
5. T. Wilson Longmore		BAE

Mr. John F. Jackson, Rural Supervisor of the Farm Security Administration, Bexar County, opened the meeting. He talked on the subject of "Getting Things Done by Group Meetings" and discussed briefly "What you and your neighbors can do in producing food for the war effort." He stated, "We know it will take everything we all can do and then we will be short."

He expressed the opinion that everyone of the FSA farmers would cooperate in every way. He stated, "The Farm Security Administration is putting out money to produce food. They thought it was just as important to let us have it as to put it into guns and ammunition. Money which is paid back by the farmers is put into the same Treasury funds as money for war bonds, which is used to furnish materials for the Armed Forces."

^{6/} The information concerning this meeting is taken from a verbatim account taken by Miss Josephine Bailey, Jr. Clerk-Typist.

"It was observed that all the borrowers were not very well acquainted with one another. Mr. Massey asked the names of all those present, discussing with each family their location, the population of the community in which they lived, and the schools in the community. All clients discussed their neighbors. It seemed the borrowers were pretty well scattered over the County.

After this informal introduction, Mr. Massey continued as follows:

"We of the Regional Office lose sight now and then of how people go about their work and how people are carrying on the food program. The only way we can keep in touch with you is through the Supervisor. We enjoy getting out in the field; but it is impossible for us to get in touch with all of the families. Meetings such as this give us a wonderful opportunity to talk with people. I wonder if neighbors visit as much now as they used to?"

Mr. S. - "I don't think so."

Mr. M. - "What is the cause of getting away from visiting our neighbors?"

Mrs. K. - "Telephones, cars. People don't go in groups as much as they used to."

Mr. M. - "Many farm people have left the farm for industry. We do have to have the workers for the defense plants, but it is also necessary to feed the Army and war workers. It may be that we have fallen down on this. Is it going to be possible to feed the world? Is it going to be possible to increase food production without increasing labor requirements above that of your present family?"

Mr. S. - "The only way to increase our meat is by increasing our hogs and cattle."

Mr. K. - "We are going to have to start helping each other out."

Mr. M. - "A little farmer now has the advantage over a big farmer in the way of labor. In defense work they are trying to get the greatest amount of production out of labor. Is that the case in farm production? Are the people actually getting the greatest production possible from labor? Will it be possible to increase food production with labor on the farms now? We know you are already working long hours; but how can we plan a program in which a lot more food can be produced?"

Mrs. R. - "You can do it through dairy production."

Mr. S. - "I can increase food production by increasing hogs, cattle, and chickens. I can not depend on hired labor, and will have to do it myself. I'm going to get me some teeth and go to Utah." (It so happens that Mr. S. is minus a set of teeth, and he was of the opinion that if he got a set he might go to Utah and get several wives who could help him with his farm labor!)

Mr. C. - "I don't think we should try to plant more and expect to get labor when we can't. It is better to raise more cattle, more hogs, and more chickens without increasing labor requirements."

Mr. K. - "You are going to have to fall back on machinery a whole lot." (He intends to help his neighbors with the machinery he has and trade work with his neighbors.)

Mr. M. - "What is a real neighbor?"

Mrs. W. - "I consider a neighbor to be one who helps us out when we need help."

(This discussion then turned to visiting again, and reminiscences of the groups in which the people used to run, and to the fact that we all feel a little closer to some of our friends than to others.)

The question was then brought up by Mr. Massey as to the effect of gas rationing on visiting.

Mr. M. - "The Government is trying to stop unnecessary use of gas. From now on as groups of farmers, your friends, and your neighbors are going to solve this problem, for it is going to take all the farm people to solve this thing. Who is going to get the farm people together to help produce this food? Would you people rather have the Government set up an agency to do this?"

Mr. S. - "Yes, if they know what to tell us to do."

Mr. R. - "A lot of the people don't want to borrow money to farm with, as they don't want to have anything to do with the Government. They say they have to sign too many papers. Some of the FSA clients find that the landlords will not deal with them because they are FSA."

Mr. M. - "The Government thought a whole lot of you people or it would not have lent you the money to farm with. If it hadn't where would our production be today?"

Emphasis was again placed on the food production program and as to whether the farmers realized the scarcity of food.

Mr. M. - "How can we arouse interest in this? Could the County Agents, the Vocational Teachers, or the Farm Security Administration Supervisors do it better than the farm families?"

Mr. S. - "I believe the farmers realize the seriousness of the food production and are realizing it more and more each day."

Mr. M. - "Do you think America can feed the United Nations and the boys in the Army? How are we going about it? What about the 'human chain' set up in the County with a neighborhood chairman? Is not this a sign of accomplishment? What about neighbors in the home talking over things? What can we do as an individual, as one person, as a group of persons? If you invite your friends to your home, do you think they would come to see you?"

Mrs. W. - "My neighbors are all older than I am, and I feel funny when I go to see them."

Mrs. C. - "Our community is to have a meat canning demonstration. One lady, not connected with the Farm Security, made the remark, 'I don't like to fool with it', which concerned canning. Another lady made the remark to me, 'My husband won't help me'. I have that trouble, too."

It was suggested that some of the trouble with the farmers not doing more was due to the failure of committees in notifying the communities when they desire to have the farmers do a certain thing.

Mr. S. - "I believe we would do better on a committee if we were told to do something than if we just did it ourselves."

A discussion then followed on pros and cons as to whether the people felt as free to talk in the homes of neighbors as in some other place such as a schoolhouse.

Mr. M. - "When you have the neighborhood meetings in your homes, doesn't that help to prepare the way for the community? First, comes the family - the husband, wife and children. Next is a number of families who work together. That is called a neighborhood. Then in a community there are several neighborhoods that make up the community. Is it not pretty hard to have a successful meeting to jump from families to a community? Is it not hard for people to go into a meeting and ask all questions that they want to? How are you going to know what to do?"

After some discussion Mr. M. asked, "Is there any further need for the Farm Security Administration?"

Mr. W. - "I imagine there would be."

Mr. H. - "That depends on if they want to collect their money first or not. The FSA is doing more than I expected them to do."

Some of the clients were not very well pleased with having to keep Record Books, and this was the remark made by Mr. S., "If anyone wants mine they can have it." But another, Mrs. W., remarked, "That doesn't bother me."

It was made plain that the Farm Security Administration has one purpose, which is to help people.

Mr. M. - "Can it help people to produce more food to win this war?"

Mr. B. - "It has helped a lot already. A lot of people that haven't canned before have gone into it in a large scale now. The Farm Security borrowers are more independent than other farmers."

Mr. S. - "We need a good leader, but we don't need a driver." (Meaning that the farmers were willing to follow a leader out of willingness, and not if the leader intended to force things upon them.)

One of the borrowers planted a large crop with the intentions of being able to hire labor, but he said, "See what has happened."

One client stated that you could scarcely get a doctor now, unless you came into town - that they didn't have time to make calls at the homes. Home nursing classes are being held in some communities, which several of the clients have been attending.

In connection with this, Mr. Massey again stressed the importance of the families in the neighborhoods and communities getting together. This seemed to be the prevailing topic of discussion throughout the meeting, with Mr. Massey presiding. One borrower said, with regards to the "getting together" with her neighbors, "I would just ask them to come over for a little 'get-together' but I wouldn't promise them any coffee!"

As the conversation drifted back to food production, Mrs. W. remarked, "If people would only raise enough for their own household, they would leave more on the shelf for someone else."

Mr. S. - "I believe if we have someone out of this office or the County Agent's office to tell us what they want us to do, I could get a crowd together to discuss things." (The spirit of cooperation of the clients is obvious; they are willing to do their part, but would like some good advice.)

Mr. M. - "If you brought your neighbors in to your home do you need any of our staff to help you?"

Mr. S. - "I just couldn't say. The trouble with my neighbors is they wouldn't pay much attention to me."

Mr. M. - "Farmers are going to have to get together in small groups and talk about producing more food to win this war. Now, the first question is, 'Are we going to produce more food?'"
"In the face of all the complaining about gas rationing and rubber, do you think we can win this war?"

Mr. K. - "Ninety percent of the people say they are going to cut down on planting peanuts. We didn't make much this year on account of labor."

Mr. M. - "Is it true in most communities that less than 10 percent of the farmers in that community do all the leading? Do not more than 10 percent of them take part in community affairs through what we call 'self-imposed' leaders? Then 90 percent are left doing nothing."

Mr. S. - "The reason I let that one neighbor of mine go ahead and 'ram-rod' it is because we don't want to cause any hard feelings."

Mr. M. - "Is it better that we cause some hard feelings and win this war, or let someone 'ram-rod' us and tell us what to do and win this war? Are you going to solve the problem yourselves or are you going to let the Government come out and demand you to do so and so?"

"How can farmers group themselves in such a way that their recommendations can be heard? Are we capable of doing this? We are going to have to get down and think of things pretty seriously. What do you think about going back to your homes and start having meetings and get together and see what you can do? To win this war we must get people to do something themselves."

Mr. C. - "I think that is a mighty good suggestion - to get people in and talk to them."

Another borrower - "I'll try it anyhow."

Mr. M. - "We have money to lend to individuals and to groups who really want to help to win this war."

Mr. C. - "One man out here has 160 acres, but is going to work in defense work at Duncan Field, as he can't get financed. I expect there is 10,000 acres that is not being worked because they can't get labor. There is too much land laying out this year."

Mr. M. - "I have tried not to make a single suggestion as to just how you are going to solve this problem. When public opinion gets ahold of people from the patriotic standpoint, it gets them started. You people can talk to your neighbors and plan with your neighbors just how you want to do it."

"Do you believe you have the ability to plan a program that will work? How do you want to use our staff and how do you want to use the County Agent to help you in the program? This is the question we would like to ask you, as we don't know how to answer it."

"I don't know how the people are going to start out. I don't know how we are going to raise the food to win the war. Let me ask you something else - Do you have confidence in yourself and your friends that they will do their part? I can't answer this, but I believe in you and I believe in your neighbors.

"Let me ask you this - Are we willing to lose our personal identity in developing the program? Do you think people are willing to lose their personal identity in a program?"

Mr. Longmore of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Little Rock, Arkansas, made a brief statement as to the purpose of his visit to this county. He stated, "I am supposed to write up the information in a readable way so that we can pass on what we get from you folks."

As the discussion had ended and the meeting was almost at a close, Mr. Jackson informed clients concerning peanut drafts. They have caused an inconvenience for the clients in receiving their money and the borrowers sometimes wait over a week for their money until the draft has been cleared through the bank.

Mr. C. expressed the opinion that there was only one buyer in the county for peanuts and that was the trouble in collecting the money. Some of the trouble also is due to the fact that the drafts are prepared in the incorrect amount and often have to be changed.

Mr. Jackson stated: "Peanut drafts cause a lot of trouble. We are trying to get it fixed so that you can collect on your peanuts without having a lot of trouble. If you people get together as a group and figure out what you want done something may be done."

It was suggested that a petition may do some good. But Mr. Massey asked, "Does a petition tell the story?" He said that a petition raised the complaint, but it does not tell you what to do about it. He suggested that a group of the farmers get together and have meetings and send copies of minutes to Mr. Jackson, Rural Supervisor.

Just before the meeting closed, Miss Morgan, Home Management Supervisor, announced that the Red Cross has informed her they will be glad to come out and give lessons in First Aid, and that those who could should take advantage of that opportunity.

The meeting adjourned.

A follow-up neighborhood meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Suggs on December 11. Six neighbors gathered in the Suggs' living room around their fireplace. ^{7/} Light was furnished by coal oil lamps. Everyone was comfortably seated around the room in an informal visiting manner. One man came late and the host waited some time on him.

Finally the host arose, leaned on the back of a chair and told briefly how he had been to San Antonio the week before and been in a discussion of food production with FSA people. There he had met Mr. Massey. He remembered that Mr. Massey had remarked that he didn't come out to make suggestions but only to find out what people were doing in the all-out war effort.

7/ Only one of the families was an RR borrower. One family came a distance of 7 miles but the majority were within 2 miles.

Mr. Suggs continued, "It looks like we're going to have to do something like our forefathers did when they were drawing up the Constitution. You know, they couldn't agree for nights and days. Had an awful time. Then someone said, 'Let's pray.' They prayed and got up and wrote the Constitution word for word without a hitch. Let's pray."

Prayer was led by one of the elderly women present, after which Mr. Suggs turned the discussion over to Mr. Massey. The discussion followed on how farmers were planning to increase food production to meet the requirements of the war.

The problem of sufficient labor was uppermost in most of their minds, although no real damage had been done up to date. One man in attendance said he was going out of the dairy business because he could not get a new truck to haul milk to town. He had made some effort to get one but it required a full day's time to get into San Antonio and wait in line to secure a hearing. Then when he did get in they turned him down.

It is perhaps significant that no one present knew the name of the war board chairman. This is indicative of the need for more knowledge of the purposes of the various war agencies in their attempts to help rural people.

One "highlight" of the evening grew out of the discussion of increased food production. This led into a discussion of the best care of chickens. Some farmers thought better feeds and sheds increased egg production while a few did not agree. A lively interchange of experiences and results seemed to leave little doubt in anyone's mind as to the desirability of better poultry and livestock care. The interesting part of this agreement arose from the fact that the farmers ironed out their differences and made their contributions without agency representatives entering the discussion. It illustrates the potentialities of discussion groups in influencing individual decision and action.

Several comments were made about the need of such neighborly get-togethers. Plans were made to continue them. In closing the meeting, the RR Supervisor commented, "I wonder if the farmer is using his War Board and Farm Transportation Committee as he should. As I see it, these agencies were set up for one purpose and one purpose only and that was to help the farmer with his problems. It's definitely certain that we can't help a man with a problem until he lets us know that he has one and what it is."

"If a man doesn't even know some of the personnel of these agencies and hasn't made an effort to contact them to find out what can be done, he certainly can't expect much."

As the group broke up one of the farmer's wives commented while standing in the doorway, "If we didn't learn any more than that (referring to knowledge of how to take up problems) it has been worth the meeting."

GENERAL QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION GROUP PROGRAM

In discussing the discussion group program with FSA field personnel a number of questions frequently recur. On the basis of the experiences and observations in Texas, answers are suggested to many of these pertinent but practical questions. The following section deals with a few of the more common of these questions.

Will low-income farm families get together and talk over problems?

In all counties in which neighborhood discussion groups were introduced the farm people themselves gave concrete evidence that farm families already are getting together for mutual aid and practical cooperation on problems. They do not do this without some direct word of mouth communication and action of an informal nature. One story was told how a man with an idea got on his horse and made the rounds of six of his neighbors and "sold them" on cooperating to get some harvesting equipment. From this small and informal beginning a community cooperative service was developed.

Habits of sharing tools, food and labor do not spring up over night. It is a hopeful sign, therefore, that in most of the communities visited many signs of cooperative effort already exist. One farmer told of how he shares his peas and turnips with his neighbors when they "come on." Another, of how he and his neighbors harvested each other's crops. These examples are merely indicative of accepted patterns of behavior among low-income farmers in east Texas.

One farmer commented that the way to win this war was to "let neighbors get together and start talking, then do something about it." When asked what they will talk about he replied, "How to win the war! That's what they'll talk about." 8/

Out of this getting together springs a sense of well-being which has given rise to expressions from farm people like the following:

"This is the best meeting I ever attended. Everyone gets his say."

"We ought to get together like this more often."

"I wish everyone in the community could have heard what was said here this evening."

In the question "Will low-income farm families get together and talk over problems?" is the implication that low-income farm families are incapable of taking practical and rational steps toward solving their own problems. In discussing this possibility with the farm families themselves it is clear, that, given the opportunity of planning their own farming operations and being reasonably assured that the capital and land would be available, they could contribute material increase to our vital food production at the same time that they would be taking strides toward their own rehabilitation. A low-income farmer put it this way, "No one knows better than we do what we can do to help win this war. Give us a chance and we will feed the world." 9/

The problem becomes, therefore, one of harnessing this underlying urge on the part of farm people to work out their own destiny in concert with their neighbors so that it will become a mighty force in winning the war.

8/ Angelina County, November 6.

9/ Freestone County, November 4

Sufficient motivation to do just this exists today in our rural neighborhood. Its potentialities are not yet tapped. They can be.

How are neighborhood discussion groups started?

All that is required is to convince an FSA farm leader of the advantages of calling in his neighbors to discuss common problems. This can be done by throwing out a challenge to a group of FSA leaders or individually through a personal visit to the leader's home.

The group method which has proved successful in east Texas includes the following steps:

(1) County staff members delineated the county into its various neighborhoods on the basis of intimate knowledge and consultation with farm people, or secured the map prepared by the Extension Service showing the neighborhoods of the county.

(2) Using this map as a guide the staff selected leaders from each of the neighborhoods. Both men and women were considered.

(3) From this list of neighborhood leaders the staff selected 10 or 15 leaders who were representative of the various types of FSA borrowers, (RR, TP, Negroes, Mexicans, or any other important groups among borrowers.)

(4) These leaders and their families were then invited to a leader meeting at the county seat where the challenge was put before them to call in their neighbors.

(5) In all cases one or more of the leaders assumed responsibility for getting his neighbors together for an informal discussion.

Another method is to call neighborhood leaders in to a community meeting.^{10/} But this does not allow as representative a group as is possible in the county wide meeting because the community may not be completely representative of the county.

Personal visits to selected leaders are also possible alternatives but this approach lacks the stimulus of group compulsion and strength. ^{11/}

Will neighbors come?

Leaders usually say their neighbors will come because "it's one neighbor talking to another neighbor." They say farmers are more likely to feel a real compulsion to attend a meeting at a neighbor's invitation than if the county supervisor, county agent, or any agency representative made the invitation. To the question, Do you think your neighbors would visit you if you called them over? the usual reply was, "Sure they will. That is, if they're real neighbors."

Who are my neighbors?

Farm leaders in east Texas have defined their neighbors variously as follows:

^{10/} See Kaufman County, November 2.

^{11/} See Navarro County, November 3.

"Any time you need help you can call on them."

"You've got to be a neighbor to have a neighbor."

"A good way to count your neighbors is when you have a long siege of sickness. You'll know 'em then."

"Neighbors are not fixed but may change from time to time."

"Those families within hollerin' distance are what I call neighbors. Although it may not be the closest families either."

"My neighbor is a person who lives close around me and does neighborly deeds." (Negro)

"They are families who just have a habit of doing things together."

"A fellow has just so much influence over only a few families."

"Everyone is related in Stewarts' Mill."

It is evident from these casual statements that farm people pick their neighbors on the basis of a number of factors. Neighbors are those families in which the leader feels real confidence and among whom he has some degree of status and recognition. They will voluntarily help him and his family in time of trouble or crisis. They usually live close to him but he does not necessarily consider those closest to him as neighbors. Between neighbors, he suggests the existence of habits of cooperation which appear spontaneously. The kinship tie is frequently important.

How many neighbors does one have? It is significant that the majority of leaders say they have "around 8 neighbors." It may vary slightly above or slightly below this figure but hardly ever does it exceed 15 or drop below 5.

The question is often asked, "Who selects the neighbors?" It is apparent from the foregoing that the farm leader alone selects his neighbors. No one else knows who they are. This should eliminate at once the trepidation that some supervisors have in calling in non-FSA borrowers. An arbitrary specification that only FSA families be included in neighborhood discussion groups does violence to the fundamental premise upon which the neighborhood discussion group program is based.

Neighborhood vs. Community?

It is generally true that farm people as well as administrative personnel tend to think more in terms of "community" than "neighborhood." This tendency to skip the neighborhood, so to speak, when thinking of the functioning unit is explained in part by the fact that the community more often than the neighborhood has a place name which identifies it verbally. This in turn gives it more formal recognition. It is the usual meeting place of called meetings which means that it is better known.

However, the group of families who comprise the neighborhood are essential to a functioning community. Most farm people agree that full participation in the life of the community requires an efficient mobilization of the neighborhood as a functioning unit or organization.

In all discussion group meetings farm leaders brought out the fact that they lived in communities varying in size from 30 to 40 families but were more intimately associated with groups of "around 8 families" who constitute the functioning neighborhoods. Farmers are very much aware, therefore, of the rough outline of the rural social structure which stems from the family as the first social group, and expands naturally through groups of families called neighborhoods to groups of neighborhoods constituting communities.

When groups of leaders were asked, "What neighborhood are you from?" the usual replies given were the names of the school house or church from which the communities take their names. Further questioning elicits the fact that a particular family does not feel itself in a close functioning relationship with all the families in the community. It was usually discovered that less than 10 families were actually intimately acquainted.

Generally this "functioning neighborhood" represents an area wherein farm people may readily walk back and forth to visit. This is roughly within a radius of 3 miles.

A clue to the neighborhood is given in such statements as:

"I'm known better back in there than down here."

"Ashforth groups into church and non-church families."

"Black Jack has 5 or 6 groups."

"I guess you'd call me in Salem community."

"I live in the middle of two communities."

"Our community has 3 or 4 religious and many nationalities."

Difficulty in getting leaders to consider the neighborhood as a starting point in community organization is evidenced in the natural inclination to shift the initiative and responsibility for conducting organized programs. This is well illustrated by an incident which took place in a leader meeting. After a lengthy discussion of the approaches which might be made to get people to participate more completely in the war program, at which time the differences between the neighborhood and community approaches were pointed out in some detail, the chairman asked one leader how he would go about getting his neighbors together. After some concentrated thought on the question, he replied, "Well, I'd get in touch with the school principal and tell him to send notice through the teachers to all the families to meet at the schoolhouse."^{12/}

This does not imply, of course, that the community type of meeting is non-essential or inappropriate. It does suggest that before a community can

function effectively some "combustion" must be set off within it and that is where the neighborhood comes in.

The farm leaders made the following significant observations:

"The neighborhood meeting prepares the way for the schoolhouse meeting."

"Everyone gets his say in a small group."

"People don't talk at the schoolhouse because there are too many people looking at them."

"There's always a funny fellow in the crowd when it's too big."

"We could hold a community meeting but people don't talk in a schoolhouse."

"We're supposed to have a Demonstration Club but it's not functioning."

"They've got a demonstration club in our community."

"Just don't feel like talking at the big meeting."

"A fellow figgers someone else has more to say than he does when we get up to the schoolhouse."

"I'm too timid to talk in a big meeting."

In addition to the sentiments expressed here it is observable that common problems are more easily resolved and as a result consensus is more readily reached when the group is small, as in the neighborhood.

What is the underlying motivation in neighborhood discussion?

When someone asked the question, "What will neighbors talk about when they get together?" the reply was, "How to win the war, that's what they will talk about." This answer in a sense sums up the chief motivation under which farm people will meet and discuss their problems during this period of crisis.

Neighborhoods represent the foundation upon which the whole superstructure of democratic discussion and action must rest.

The first few neighborhood meetings are likely to take on the aspect of "testimonial" meetings. Pride is expressed in what each one has already accomplished, or great interest is shown in what he has to relate about his experiences. Acquiescence is usually shown by nodding of heads or exclamations of "Yes sir, yes sir, that's right."

It is an accepted principle of learning that people start with what is known and proceed to the unknown. Neighborhood discussion groups give splendid opportunity for people to extend their areas of agreement or

knowledge by exchange of ideas and shared experiences. Through this mutually enriching discussion each participant contributes from the angle of his own present experience and insight, and all emerge with a somewhat re-made or modified point of view.

In one of the meetings it happened that the first man to express himself gave a somewhat heated description of the labor shortage facing the farmers. 13/ Others present supported this thesis. Suddenly another farmer injected an observation into the discussion stating that from his standpoint there was no such thing as labor shortage because he had a small farm. In fact, he suggested that his family could assume additional work on the farm by getting more dairy cattle. Other farmers confirmed this observation.

Later it was disclosed that without exception those families with large farms and consequently large labor requirements were keenly aware of this problem while small farmers in the meeting took advantage of the occasion to indicate how they could increase their operations. Out of the discussion a better understanding was engendered for the other fellow's problems and point of view.

How can the program be made self-sustaining?

If one thinks of the neighborhood discussion group program as a formal organization with regular meeting nights and an ever increasing growth in membership he will probably be disappointed. For that matter, few, if any, organizations have a continuous upward trend in activity or success.

Experience has shown that where farm people recognize an immediate problem and have crystallized some of their thinking on how to go about solving it they usually assume the whole responsibility of calling meetings as often as is deemed necessary to meet the situation. One group held three meetings in quick succession on as many nights to get a plan worked out for harvesting peanuts. The first meeting usually results in the demand for another meeting within a week.

The question, "When and how often should the group meet?" is a bothersome one. Farmers' activities are all governed by the rhythm of planting, cultivating and harvesting. Their entire social and economic life is keyed to these seasonal periods. To expect farmers to put aside their plows or hoes or combines to attend meetings during periods of critical farm operations is asking too much. The periods of peak farm activity, therefore, are often the periods during which meetings could well be dispensed with unless emergency situations arise.

Although local conditions vary, from conversation with county staff members and farm people, it seems that the best months for holding meetings for planning and action are from November through February of the following year. This is usually the time when the farmer is thinking over his next year's plan of work.

During March and April he is getting ready for planting which is completed in May. His work period through June and July is sporadic until the hay

13/ Freestone County, November 11.

harvest period in August. Then in September and October his time is taken up by the cotton harvest. Long hours in the field enforce a certain regimen which is not conducive to night meetings and consequently attendance during the peak periods of work may be poor.

Are farm families "over-organized" and "over-met?"

Low-income farmers say that they are not over-organized or over-met. Very few of the farm women (from 10 to 25 percent) belong to or attend Home Demonstration Clubs. The usual reply to the question, "What do people in your neighborhood do?" is, "Oh, we go to church and Sunday School. That's about all."

In only a few isolated instances were low-income farm leaders participating in effective wartime organizations. In no case did the leaders know the County War Board Chairman. A few were acquainted with the Victory Leader System set up by Extension but few could tell what it was doing. In most cases the people were familiar with the rationing board. The only special war programs of general application of which they were aware were the scrap drives and the peanut program.

The attitude of many farmers was that the war planning was being done by a "group of men up there at the county seat or in Washington." Lack of active leadership was observable among low-income farm families as very few of the leaders in attendance were participating in local organizations. Now and then one was found who was a steward in his church or a school trustee but this, too, was the exception. Only about one leader in seven was actively taking part in some organization or community activity.

Facts divulged in these leader group meetings lead to the conclusion that leadership in rural areas is highly concentrated. One non-borrower attending the neighborhood discussion group in Freestone County was chairman of the County War Board, Ration Board, Farm Machinery Rationing Board, and was also a county seat school trustee. He said he tried to farm 6,000 acres of land in addition to the above assignments.

One may well ask why it is that low-income farm families have not taken a more active part in the life of the community. A farm woman answered this question as follows, "We just don't have real neighbors in our district. Some of these people think that they are a little better than we are. They say we're 'on the government' but the way I look at it those fellows who take AAA checks are on the government just as much as we are. At least we intend to pay it all back." 14/

Another farmer's wife put it this way, "My neighbors are scattered and they don't neighbor very much. Why, it's terrible, I tell you I'm almost a mind to call in my Negro neighbors. They treat me a lot better than some of the white families. Course we haven't lived in the community very long but somebody has got to do something about it." 15/

14/ Freestone County, November 4. See also the story of the "speckled cow,
Hamilton County, December 2.

15/ Freestone County, November 4.

Social isolation among low-income farm families is very real and gives rise to additional statements like, "Ain't many neighbors any more, I tell you."

"After the young folks left the community our community went dead."

"When you work 17 hours a day you can't stay up with all that's going on."

"We sure need a Home Demonstration Club in our community."

Discouraging economic conditions in the past cannot be under-rated as factors that have kept many farm families from assuming their rightful and normal places in community affairs. Many testimonials were given of the freedom and relief experienced when private debts were paid off and combined into a single loan from one government agency. As one farmer put it, "I can walk down the street now and feel free to meet anybody."

Often the average farmer under-rates his own capacity and ability. Some are just waiting. They are willing to cooperate but are reluctant to take the lead. This does not mean that they are incapable of assuming leadership but is rather the result of a lack of self-confidence in themselves induced by depressing economic and social factors. A majority express confidence in their neighbors, however, and this can be used as the starting point for encouraging them to take steps leading to active community participation whereby developing more confidence in themselves. This is reflected in the following comment by a farmer, "What we need is a 'table discussion' and it'll give a fellow strength."

Where will the leaders be found?

Only out of real life situations are leaders developed. If the stage is not set for the evolving of new leadership then new leadership will not be forthcoming. But all normal individuals are capable of taking the simple steps suggested in the neighborhood discussion group approach. In so doing a situation is set up wherein the opportunity for new leaders to assert themselves is given.

Do farm people cooperate with each other as much as they formerly did?

One farmer said he noticed a significant change in the spirit of cooperation between farmers in the neighborhood within the last 6 months and many of those in attendance agreed with him. This suggests that perhaps the degree of cooperation varies from time to time and is in part dependent upon the necessities of the situation. Some of the families in attendance at the meetings felt that in some way farm people are going to have to get closer together as the war goes on. It was pointed out that the rubber shortage is forcing people to share autos and trucks to get to town and that more families are helping each other harvest the crops.

Lively discussion over whether people were as considerate of each other as they used to be led to the conclusion that human nature was about the same today as it ever was and that a crisis would bring it out. 16/

Are low-income farm people able to recognize their problems?

Low-income farm people believe that many "big" farmers are being forced out of business by the shortage of labor and that this will hinder war production of vital foods. In order to offset this trend they believe firmly that it is the "small" farmer's duty to produce more than he ever has in the past.

If you ask the small farmer whether he thinks he can produce more food to help win the war he will say emphatically, "Yes, sir, we can do it!" Then if you ask him why he thinks so he is likely to reply, "Why, we've got to."

How does he intend to do this? By increasing his production in those things which will require less labor or at least a more even distribution of labor requirements. Some farmers say they could handle more dairy cows, others could take on more chickens, pigs, and feed more cattle. One family reported that they started in with 2 cows, now they have 8 and think they could take care of a few more. Another family started with 30 hens and increased their flock to 150.

"Farmers are looking farther ahead than they did last year. They want more hogs, chickens and syrup," said a mature farmer. "They sure would like to be able to do more planning." What he meant was that he hoped that the average farmer could plan his next year's program for himself on the basis of what he thought his maximum performance could be in the light of acute food production problems and then be assured of the necessary capital to carry his plans out. This latter consideration has always hampered the small farmer's planning.

The larger farmer recognizes the shortage of labor too and intends to meet it by cutting down his operations unless more labor or machinery is made available. He says this is all he can do because he and his family cannot work all of his acreage without hired labor.

Many low-income farmers see the possibility of pooling equipment and labor to obtain increased production. The following are sample comments taken at random from the various leader meetings:

"We ought to get our minds together on what we want to do. All of us know that we can get more money for a large batch of cattle than for a small bunch."

"If we figger out what we plan to do, then reason out how other people can help us do it we'll get somewhere."

"Cut down on cotton and peanuts and raise more hogs, chickens, and cows."

"If you had a cooperating neighborhood you'd be more liable to get a buyer (for cattle)."

"Many people would stay and produce if they only had the means."

"Farmers may have to increase the number of cows and hogs."

"We will have to exchange labor, perhaps."

"Couldn't we plan our planting of some crops so that we could all market together?"

"If everyone would milk 3 more cows our dairy problem would be solved."

A description of a typical problem approach follows:

A number of farmers said they could handle more cattle, perhaps 10 or 12 more. In order to do this most of them needed more barn space. Some one suggested that if permission could be secured from the War Board to use native lumber he knew that he could arrange to have some lumber cut for the barns. He planned to take the matter up with his neighbors to see what could be done.

Others realized they would need additional feed. One man suggested that since many farmers in west Texas were anxious to get rid of their surplus feed crop and had insufficient labor for harvest it might be possible for a group of east Texas farmers to go out and help harvest the feed and accept pay in kind. 17/

These are simple illustrations of the way in which discussion groups may help farmers to recognize problems and devise practical steps to bring about a solution.

How do farm people vary in their response to organization and cooperation?

Noticeable variations seem to exist between the people of different areas in respect to their response to organization and cooperation. Large farmers respond differently from little farmers, Negroes differently from whites.

Big farmers, with their greater reliance on and experience in commercial agriculture, are apt to approach their problems on a more national basis, thinking in terms of price and costs of production. But small farmers, of the subsistence or family size type are more likely to think in terms of exchange in kind and the use of family labor. Consequently they place less stress on extraneous factors such as price and costs of production. The appeal to cooperative effort must therefore be adapted to the type of farmers present in the group.

Cooperation among small farmers can be expected to take the form of very informal activity on a neighborhood level while large scale farmers are likely to think of cooperation on a more formal basis and at higher levels of organization, perhaps at the county level or above.

Negroes show marked tendencies to cooperate more effectively on neighborhood and community levels than do whites. This may be explained by the limited outlook and perspective of the average Negro farmer. He is forced to look within his own narrow world for social contacts and for the

17/ Tyler County, November 7.

solution to most of his problems. Consequently, he tends to respond more readily to the neighborhood approach than do the whites whose interests and opportunities are likely to be somewhat less limited.

Where is the best place to meet?

It is almost essential that the neighborhood discussion group meet in one of the homes rather than in a school house or church. This is more important than appears on the surface. By specifying the home as the meeting place a friendly informal setting is assured which will encourage the participation of all individuals present. It will forestall the tendency of some to want to hold "big" community-wide meetings without going through the democratic process of securing widespread participation and response. The need for larger community meetings may, of course, grow out of the smaller neighborhood meetings.

Who should lead the discussion?

In the initial stages of the program it is important that some qualified person assume responsibility for initiating and guiding the discussion but at the same time no one individual should dominate. On this point the discussion group differs from administrative and other types of meetings.

Experience indicates that it is sound procedure for the farmer in whose home the group is meeting to take the lead in explaining why the group has come together and the general plan of procedure. In addition it seems desirable for one of the FSA staff to take a "participating observer" position so as to help out in the discussion when necessary and at the same time become acquainted with discussion techniques.

Should meetings be planned in advance?

From experience it seems that broad planning only should be attempted. This may include merely the focusing of thought and discussion on a current problem or the guidance of discussion from areas of common ground to unknown areas. The entire process is one of pooling the advice and counsel of many, often divergent, points of view which in the give and take of informal discussion are usually modified sufficiently to permit agreement on a desirable course of action.

What should people discuss?

This is a question for the farm people to answer for themselves. Anything which they consider as important should be considered, and it is particularly inadvisable to limit the discussion to questions of crops, livestock, gardens, canning, etc. Most farm families are keenly interested in community life in general and want to take a greater part in the war efforts; this may lead them into problems of war participation, health, nutrition, recreation, or other vital questions.

The practical nature of neighborhood discussion groups is enhanced by the limited demands which they make on professional or technical leaders. The

discussion group program is predicated on the assumption that most farm men and women are capable of talking over their problems and deciding on some definite steps which they themselves can take in solving them. Substantiation for such an assumption may be found in numerous instances where small groups of farm people with little or no outside assistance have met to plan and carry out various community enterprises. In such instances the county staff may not be aware that any cooperative activity is going on until one of the participants requests financial help to carry his end of the bargain.

How long should meetings last?

From experience in east Texas and elsewhere it is noted that people usually "talk themselves out" in approximately 2 hours. This means, of course, that the actual time spent at the farm home may run around 3 hours since some time is taken up in personal talk and visiting, both before and after the meeting proper.

How can one person be kept from monopolizing the conversation?

In one of the discussion group meetings a particularly dominant character took the opening 10 or 15 minutes to set forth in a forceful way his ideas of what was wrong with the country. One of the observers at this meeting remarked afterwards: "When I heard Mr. _____ was going to be there I knew he would steal the show." But Mr. _____ did not "steal the show" as later events proved. After he had "blown off steam" the meeting settled down to a constructive discussion. In most instances, as in this case, the group of neighbors will see to it that no one individual is allowed to monopolize the discussion.

Can the County FSA Staff be expected to carry on this program in addition to all the other activities for which they are responsible?

It is not expected that the county staff will be present at all meetings of neighborhood discussion groups. This would be a physical impossibility. Furthermore, it is not to be expected that the entire county will respond to the program at once. Only few of the neighborhoods may respond favorably to the idea at first. It is suggested that the county staff arrange to work rather closely with at least one or two neighborhoods for the present.

This procedure should help to keep the staff from becoming bogged down in a formidable county-wide program before they are ready for it. At the same time it provides an opportunity for members of the staff to become familiar with discussion group techniques and to work out procedure adapted to the type of neighborhood and community organization prevailing in the county.

Some may feel that this is "wasting time", since it represents such a small endeavor in a seemingly formidable assignment. However, experience has shown that such a program tends to spread outward from neighborhood to neighborhood in an almost geometric progression. This applies to counties and districts as well as to neighborhoods within the county.

Most people are amazed at how readily low-income farm families respond to neighborhood discussion groups. The germinating process may be slow but once started on a sound basis it tends to spread rather rapidly.

What is the relation of neighborhood discussion groups to the
Agricultural Extension program?

The county agent in one of the county leader meetings 18/ explained Extension "Victory Leader" organization as follows:

"We broke down the county into 26 communities and then into 108 neighborhoods. Each neighborhood represents from 20 to 30 families. We appointed a man and woman as neighborhood representatives to be responsible for contacting the families in their neighborhood.

"The purpose of these Victory Leaders is to carry useful information to and from rural people. They have already helped a lot on the scrap drive and on the fire control program."

"But we all know that it is an impossible job for the Extension personnel to do all this organization work alone. It will be necessary for all you people (low-income farm leaders and all other agencies) to help."

Neighborhood discussion groups are not to be considered as substitutes for or duplicates of any other organization. Neither are they "just another organization." Their primary purpose is to draw low-income farm families into fuller and more active participation in the war effort and in the activities of their communities. Where such families are already actively participating in normal community life the encouragement of discussion groups may be unnecessary.

Out of neighborhood discussion groups have come requests for Home Demonstration and 4-H Clubs. It is probable that they will also result in requests for the county agent and the home demonstration agent to give demonstrations among groups which they have hitherto been unable to reach. In one case the woman of a neighborhood group arranged to ask the county nurse to attend one of their meetings to see whether a home nursing course could be given.

The democratic conduct of the war requires that lay and professional leadership be pooled in an effort to secure full participation of all the people. There must be as little overlapping of effort as possible and no segments of our population should be neglected. The evidence in Texas discloses a lack of organization and active participation of low-income farm people in the war effort which must be remedied as quickly as possible.

The cooperation and advice of Extension and all other agency personnel should be sought in the discussion group program. There is some danger that organizations primarily for FSA borrowers may serve further to isolate these families. Hence it is highly desirable that interested non-borrowers be made welcome at the neighborhood meetings. "Neighborhood discussion groups may well be thought of as one means of securing the democratic cooperation of all farm people and agency representatives in the war effort."

18/ Liberty County, November 9

Discussion groups vs. group supervision?

A careful distinction should be made between discussion groups and group supervision. Discussion groups are primarily by the people, of the people, and for the people, while group supervision is primarily for the people.

Discussion groups may well become a "grass roots" basis for the whole FSA program, including group supervision. Out of discussion group action will come requests for assistance from FSA personnel to provide "feet," so to speak, for the plans and needs of low-income farm people. But in all cases the recognized need should precede the demand upon FSA for assistance. It must not be inferred that neighborhood discussion supercedes other programs and activities of FSA. It is rather a means of strengthening all phases of the program.

Do neighborhood discussion groups lead to cooperatives?

Discussion groups provide an excellent opportunity for the consideration of all types of cooperative endeavor. One non-borrower asked whether it was possible to set up a county-wide purchasing and marketing association with a capitalized value of around \$17,000. He offered to contribute up to a thousand dollars if enough farmers were interested to insure its success. 19/

In another case consideration was given to an unused frozen meat plant. Discussion centered on the advisability of operating this refrigerating plant on a cooperative basis. 20/

In one community FSA made dairy loans for cows and barns, also poultry houses, but the borrowers were unable to get lumber to build barns. In discussing this problem in a neighborhood meeting the group decided upon a cooperative saw mill. Subsequently, they located a portable saw mill which will fill their needs. The loan plans and dockets have been prepared for four borrowers to purchase the saw mill cooperatively.

This group is now planning a co-op moving machine, feed, and grist mill. 21/

These illustrations of cooperative services growing out of discussion groups are merely indicative of what actually happened. Furthermore, a number of individual loans have resulted from the discussion of problems and needs in neighborhood meetings. In some cases the farmers were not previously aware of the credit facilities available to them through FSA.

Will low-income farmers accept responsibility for all-out-food production?

All the evidence based on experience with the initiation of neighborhood discussion in 11 counties of Texas points to the conclusion that low-income farmers are willing and anxious to assume a more important role in the production of food to win this war.

19/ Liberty County, November 9

20/ Ibid

21/ Tyler County, November 7

COMMENTS OF FSA FIELD PERSONNEL

"There is nothing particularly new in the technique but it is impressive due to the fact that the participants are kept alert and thinking. In each group I attended the members were very responsive and brought out many things that they felt could be done through community or neighborhood discussions. They felt these community meetings would do more toward bringing the community closer together than anything that had been done since the advent of the automobile." (N. A. Cleveland, District RR Supervisor, District III.)

"We find that it takes quite a bit of time in developing these meetings; it takes follow-up work to keep one active but we do feel like it is a good thing to do." (Louis W. Lee, County RR Supervisor, Freestone County.)

"The supervisory personnel in this office feel that this type of educational work will reach people that have not been reached heretofore in the type of group meetings that have been held." (Dan J. Wallin, County RR Supervisor, Angelina County.)

"There is nothing fundamentally new about this group discussion idea. It is just capitalizing on the traditional tendency of rural people to 'visit' and talk about their business and current events, politics, and religion. *** I think it is one of the most truly democratic movements we have sponsored." (Mac Neal Irwin, District RR Supervisor, District IV)

"In the Beech Creek Community, we made dairy loans for cows and dairy barns, also poultry houses. The borrowers were unable to get lumber to build the barns, and we mentioned to the community leader that a co-op sawmill might solve their problems. They immediately called the group together, without the aid of the county personnel, and discussed the matter among themselves and decided this would be their solution to the matter. With little aid and assistance from this office, they located a portable sawmill which will fill their needs. We are now preparing plans and loan dockets for four borrowers to purchase the sawmill cooperatively. They are also planning a co-op mowing machine, feed, and grist mill. Since dairy cows are hard to find in this section, we are assisting them in plans to buy a truckload lot from Dallas. Buying feed in carload lots from west Texas is being considered by the group." (Max L. Beasley, County RR Supervisor, Tyler-Harden Counties.)

"The response of these people was excellent. They all enjoyed the meeting and especially enjoyed talking instead of being 'talked at.' *** We believe that the method used, if carried out by our personnel, will be most important in realizing the goals set up by this Nation for the production of food and that it will stimulate questioning on other topics and on other problems and that such discussions will end up in a valuable solution to many of them." (C. William Brodnax, Jr., District RR Supervisor, District VI.)

22/ Excerpts from letters written by field personnel to the regional office.

"Those attending the meeting were very enthusiastic over the meeting. Too many times the farmer has attended similar meetings, but only listened and did not feel free to participate. But this was one meeting where he was able to discuss his problems freely without hesitation. They liked the idea of sharing in the meeting instead of sitting back and listening to a long drawn out speech." (John McGrath, County RR Supervisor, Liberty-Chambers Counties.)

"I believe these neighborhood discussion groups are very vital at this time, and should be attended as far as possible by an FSA employee because it appears that the war information channels set up by the Extension Service are simply not functioning and the farmers are groping in the dark, both as to what is required of them in the war effort and where to go and what procedure to follow in case they need rationed or restricted machinery and other supplies of a similar nature." (Wesley H. Groce, District RR Supervisor, District VIII.)

"These informal gatherings have opened our eyes as to what a group can accomplish in the way of discussing and settling their problems as a group rather than as individuals." (John F. Jackson, County RR Supervisor, and Jimmie Morgan, County HM Supervisor, Bexar County.)

"Whether the group will continue to meet remains to be seen. I am convinced that these groups discussions, when properly organized, will carry on in most instances and will contribute something worthwhile to the community." (P. M. Helms, District RR Supervisor, District X.)

"The home of this borrower was selected because it is a natural neighborhood center and these Norwegian families have been accustomed to visiting this home. *** We found that every family whom Mr. A. had invited was present and after a period of approximately 30 minutes of neighborly chatting, the meeting was called to order by the host. **** No one made a speech, a fact particularly noticed by some of the women. Many farm problems arose in the course of the discussion ... and the group recognized the importance of additional meetings later to solve the problems. Among the immediate problems that arose were:

1. Scarcity of doctors.
2. Meeting the farm labor shortage.
3. Need of a local egg and milk route.
4. Scarcity of tenants to farm good farming land.
5. Gasoline rationing.
6. Availability of feed.
7. War crops for 1943.

(Robert A. Wells, County RR Supervisor, Bosque, County, Texas.)

"This (San Saba County, schoolhouse meeting) in my opinion was an ideal neighborhood discussion. Judging from the reaction in Hamilton County it was deemed advisable for Mr. Ellison, County RR Supervisor, to keep the discussion 'on the Beam'. However, it developed that it was not necessary as the group, led by one of their own members, seemed to be ready and willing to attack their own problems. Many problems were brought up, listed and discussed in order of their importance. Of course, the theme behind the whole picture was Food Production." (Carl P. Emmett, District RR Supervisor, District XI.)

"We are planning to have more of these meetings in the various communities because we believe they are of benefit to the farmers and also to us in expressing the need for more production for the war needs." (Sam R. Ellison, RR Supervisor, San Saba County.)

"It was further agreed among the group that if it took increased production to win the war they would increase their food production although there was no prospect of extra laborers. Women present were confident on their part of increased food production." (Glenn H. Mitchell, RR Supervisor, Cooke County.)

"I felt that the ratio of Government employees to farm leaders was entirely too high, but each of us needed to observe the method of conducting the meeting and our presence did not seem to dampen the response from the farm leaders. (Louie Dunbar, Area Specialist, Area I.)

"The technique involved the following pointers:

(a) The discussion leader should not take too much time for his own discussion.

(b) All members present should have an opportunity to state their views.

(c) Discussion leader should keep discussion on the subject at hand.

A point of most importance is in the selection of families who will attend the Neighborhood Action group meetings. As was stressed at Liberty these should be friends of the host family.

"The reaction of the people attending was at first a reluctance to try to hold 'another meeting'. This attitude was no doubt prompted by their past experience with community meetings where a divergence of viewpoints stalled action. By first meeting in neighborhood groups, however, many of the objections can be cleared and a more active interest should be carried to the community meeting. After this viewpoint was presented the borrowers were enthusiastic over the possibilities of Neighborhood action groups." (A. B. Kennerly, Acting Area Specialist, Area II.)

"With reference to the meeting of community leaders in Gainessville, I was much gratified at the ready and open response of these people for the first time. No doubt, this was the first opportunity these people had had to give expression to their ideas regarding their part in the war effort. The meeting was so intensely interesting that the six families represented did not at any time show any accord to have the meeting adjourn. This was an average group of FSA borrowers and to my mind are capable of splendid community leadership in obtaining responses from their neighbors in neighborhood discussion meetings." (Henry L. Gentz, Area Specialist, Area IV.)

"Problems relating to food production, rationing, and the general war effort were discussed." (Lena W. Taylor, Area HM Supervisor.)

"It will be necessary to work through groups and rely upon neighborhood leaders to supervise farm plans during the coming year." (W.M. Burkes, Area Specialist, Area V.)

"The Bosque county meeting was almost a direct contrast to the Kaufman county meeting. The Rural Supervisor notified a leading family in a community of the possibilities of the neighborhood meeting. They wanted it at their home. The family invited all their neighbors. Some were not Farm

Security families. About ten families were present. They were all in one room..*** "From my observations I believe that it is a good practice to get a leading citizen in a neighborhood to invite the neighbors to attend the organization meeting in his home." (Willie Mae Dunham, Area HM Supervisor.)

MAR 31 1943